

# THE NATIONALISM READER

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who by an obligation above them, and infinitely superior, are bound to submit their will to that law. The municipal corporations of that universal kingdom are not morally at liberty at their pleasure, and on their speculations of a contingent improvement, wholly to separate and tear asunder the bands of their subordinate community and to dissolve it into an unsocial, uncivil, unconnected chaos of elementary principles. It is the first and supreme necessity only, a necessity that is not chosen but chooses, a necessity paramount to deliberation, that admits no discussion and demands no evidence, which alone can justify a resort to anarchy. This necessity is no exception to the rule, because this necessity itself is a part, too, of that moral and physical disposition of things to which man must be obedient by consent or force; but if that which is only submission to necessity should be made the object of choice, the law is broken, nature is disobeyed, and the rebellious are outlawed, cast forth, and exiled from this world of reason, and order, and peace, and virtue, and fruitful penitence, into the antagonist world of madness, discord, vice, confusion, and unavailing sorrow.

## ERNEST RENAN

*What Is a Nation?*

## I

Since the end of the Roman Empire, or rather since the dismemberment of the empire of Charlemagne, Western Europe appears to us as divided into nations, some of which have, at certain periods, tried to establish a hegemony over others, without ever achieving any permanent success. Where Charles V, Louis XIV, and Napoleon I failed, no man in the future will probably ever succeed. To set up a new Roman Empire or a new empire such as that of Charlemagne has become an impossibility. Europe is so much divided that any attempt at universal domination would immediately produce a coalition that would compel the ambitious nation to retire within its natural limits. A kind of durable balance has been established. Centuries may pass, but France, England, Germany, and Russia, in spite of all their adventures, will retain their distinct historical individuality, like pieces on a draught-board, the squares of which are ever varying in size and importance, but never quite blend completely.

Nations, thus conceived, are a fairly recent phenomenon in history. Such nations were unknown in ancient times. Egypt, China, and old Chaldaea were by no manner of means nations. They were flocks led by an offspring of the Sun or an offspring of Heaven. There were no Egyptian citizens, any more than there are Chinese citizens. The classical antique world had its republics and royal towns, its confederations of local republics and its empires, but it hardly had a nation in our sense of the word. Athens, Sparta, Sidon, and Tyre are small centres of patriotism, however admirable; they are cities possessing relatively small territories. Gaul, Spain, and Italy, before their absorption into the Roman Empire, were assemblies of tribes, often in league with one another, but without central institutions or dynasties. Nor could the empires of Assyria or Persia or that of Alexander point to any mother country. There were never any Assyrian patriots; nor was the empire of Persia anything but a vast feudal estate. There is not a nation that traces its origin back to Alexander's colossal enterprise, which was yet so fertile in its consequences for the general history of civilization.

The Roman Empire came much nearer to being a mother country. Roman

rule, at first so hard to bear, very soon became loved in return for the immense benefit conferred by the suppression of war. It was a grand association, synonymous with order, peace, and civilization. During its closing period, men of lofty mind, enlightened clerics, and the educated classes had a real sense of "the Roman Peace," as opposed to the menacing chaos of barbarism. But an empire twelve times as great as France is today could not be termed a State in the modern sense of the word. The split between East and West was inevitable. In the third century attempts at a Gallic empire failed; and it was the Germanic invasion that ushered into the world the principle which afterwards served as a basis for the existence of nationalities.

What in fact did the Germanic peoples accomplish from the time of their great invasions in the fifth century to the last Norman conquests in the tenth? They effected little change in the essential character of races, but they imposed dynasties and a military aristocracy on more or less important areas within the former empire of the West, and these areas assumed the names of their invaders. Hence we have a France, a Burgundy, a Lombardy, and—later on—a Normandy. The rapid superiority won by the Frankish Empire renewed, for a brief period, the unity of the West. But about the middle of the ninth century this empire was shattered beyond repair. The Treaty of Verdun laid down its dividing lines, immutable in principle, and from that time France, Germany, England, Italy, and Spain march forward, by ways often tortuous and beset by countless hazards, to their full national existence such as we see spread out before us today.

What is, in fact, the distinguishing mark of these various States? It is the fusion of the populations that compose them. There is no analogy between the countries we have just mentioned and the state of affairs in Turkey, where Turk, Slav, Greek, Armenian, Arab, Syrian, and Kurd are as distinct today as at the time of the conquest. Two essential circumstances contributed to this result. First, the fact that the Germanic peoples adopted Christianity as soon as they came into more or less permanent contact with the Greek and Latin peoples. When victor and vanquished have the same religion, or rather when the victor adopts the religion of the vanquished, there can be no question of the Turkish system of complete discrimination according to a man's religion. The second circumstance was that the victors forgot their own language. The grandsons of Clovis, Alaric, Gondebaud, Alboin, and Rollo spoke the Roman tongue. This fact was itself the consequence of another important particular circumstance, viz., that the Franks, Burgundians, Goths, Lombards, and Normans were accompanied by very few women of their own race. During several generations the chiefs married none but German wives. But their concubines and their children's nurses were Latins, and the whole tribe married Latin women, with the result that, from the time of the settlement of the Franks and Goths on Roman soil, the *lingua francica* and the *lingua gothica* had but a very short career. It was not so in England, since the Anglo-Saxon invaders doubtless brought wives

with them. The British population fled before them, and furthermore, Latin was no longer, or rather had never been, the dominant language in Britain. If, in the fifth century, Old French had been the general language in Gaul, Clovis and his men would not have deserted their Germanic tongue in favour of Old French.

Hence we get the following most important result, namely that, in spite of the brutality of the invaders, the pattern laid down by them became, in the course of time, the very pattern of the nation. Quite rightly, *France* became the name of a country containing but an imperceptible minority of Franks. [ . . . ]

To forget and—I will venture to say—to get one's history wrong, are essential factors in the making of a nation; and thus the advance of historical studies is often a danger to nationality. Historical research, in fact, casts fresh light upon those deeds of violence which have marked the origin of all political formations, even of those which have been followed by the most beneficial results. Unity is always realized by brute force. The union of North and South in France was the result of a reign of terror and extermination carried on for nearly a century. The French monarchy, which is generally regarded as typifying a steady process of crystallization and as having brought about the most perfect example of national unity known to history, when studied more closely loses its glamour. It was cursed by the nation that it was engaged in moulding, and today it is only those who can see the past in perspective who can appreciate the value of its achievement.

These great laws in the history of Western Europe become obvious by contrast. Many countries have failed in such an enterprise as that which the king of France, partly by his tyranny and partly by his justice, brought to so admirable a conclusion. Beneath the crown of St. Stephen, Magyars and Slavs have remained as distinct as they were eight hundred years ago. The House of Habsburg, far from blending the diverse elements in its dominions, has kept them apart and often in opposition to each other. In Bohemia the Czech and German elements are superposed like oil and water in a glass. The Turkish policy of separating nationalities according to religion has had very much graver consequences, since it has entailed the ruin of the East. Take a town like Salonica or Smyrna, and you will find five or six communities, each with its own memories and almost nothing in common. Now it is of the essence of a nation that all individuals should have much in common, and further that they should all have forgotten much. No French citizen knows whether he is a Burgundian, an Alan, a Taifal, or a Visigoth, while every French citizen must have forgotten the massacre of St. Bartholomew's and the massacres in the South in the thirteenth century. Not ten families in France can prove their Frankish descent, and even if they could, such a proof would be inherently unsound, owing to the innumerable unknown alliances capable of upsetting all genealogical systems.

The modern nation is, therefore, the historic consequence of a series of

facts converging towards the same point. Sometimes unity has been brought about by a dynasty, as in the case of France; at other times it has been brought about by the direct volition of provinces, as in the case of Holland, Switzerland, and Belgium; or again, by a general sentiment, the tardy conqueror of the freaks of feudalism, as in the case of Italy and Germany. At all times such formations have been guided by the urge of some deep-seated reason. In such cases, principles burst out with the most unexpected surprises. In our own times we have seen Italy unified by its defeats and Turkey demolished by its victories. Every defeat advanced the Italian cause, while every victory served to ruin Turkey, since Italy is a nation, and Turkey, apart from Asia Minor, is not. It is to the glory of France that, by the French Revolution, she proclaimed that a nation exists of itself. It is not for us to disapprove of imitators. The principle of nations is our principle. But what, then, is a nation? Why is Holland a nation, while Hanover and the Grand Duchy of Parma are not? How is it that France persists in being a nation, when the principle that created her has vanished? Why is Switzerland, with its three languages, its two religions, and three or four races, a nation, when Tuscany, for example, which is so homogeneous, is not? Why is Austria a state and not a nation? In what does the principle of nations differ from that of races? These are points on which thoughtful men require, for their own peace of mind, to come to some conclusion. Although the affairs of the world are rarely settled by arguments of this nature, yet studious men like to bring reason to bear, on these questions, and to unravel the skein of confusion that entangles the superficial mind.

## II

We are told by certain political theorists that a nation is, above all, a dynasty representing a former conquest that has been at first accepted, and then forgotten, by the mass of the people. According to these politicians, the grouping of provinces effected by a dynasty, its wars, marriages, and treaties, ends with the dynasty that has formed it. It is quite true that most modern nations have been made by a family of feudal origin, which has married into the country and provided some sort of centralizing nucleus. The boundaries of France in 1789 were in no way natural or necessary. The large area that the House of Capet had added to the narrow strip accorded by the Treaty of Verdun was indeed the personal acquisition of that family. At the time when the annexations were made no one thought about natural limits, the right of nations, or the wishes of provinces. Similarly, the union of England, Ireland, and Scotland was a dynastic performance. The only reason why Italy took so long to become a nation was that, until the present century, none of her numerous reigning families became a centre of union. It is an odd fact that she derives the royal title from the obscure island of Sardinia, a land which is scarcely Italian. Holland, self-created by an act of

heroic resolution, has nonetheless entered into a close bond of marriage with the House of Orange, and would run serious risks, should this union ever be endangered.

Is, however, such a law absolute? Doubtless, it is not. Switzerland and the United States which have been formed, like conglomerates, by successive additions, are based on no dynasty. I will not discuss the question insofar as it concerns France. One would have to be able to read the future in order to do so. Let us merely observe that this great French line of kings had become so thoroughly identified with the national life that, on the morrow of its downfall, the nation was able to subsist without it. Furthermore, the eighteenth century had entirely changed the situation. After centuries of humiliation, man had recovered his ancient spirit, his self-respect, and the idea of his rights. The words "mother country" and "citizen" had regained their meaning. Thus it was possible to carry out the boldest operation ever performed in history—an operation that may be compared to what, in physiology, would be an attempt to bring back to its former life a body from which brain and heart had been removed.

It must, therefore, be admitted that a nation can exist without any dynastic principle, and even that nations formed by dynasties can be separated from them without thereby ceasing to exist. The old principle, which takes into account only the right of princes, can no longer be maintained: And, besides dynastic right, there exists also national right. On what criterion is this national right to be based? By what sign is it to be known? And from what tangible fact is it properly to be derived?

1. Many will boldly reply, from race. The artificial divisions, they say, the results of feudalism, royal marriages, and diplomatic congresses, have broken down. Race is what remains stable and fixed; and this it is that constitutes a right and a lawful title. The Germanic race, for example, according to this theory, has the right to retake the scattered members of the Germanic family, even when these members do not ask for reunion. The right of the Germanic family over such-and-such a province is better than the right of its inhabitants over themselves. A sort of primordial right is thus created analogous to the divine right of kings; and the principle of ethnography is substituted for that of nations. This is a very grave error, and if it should prevail, it would spell the ruin of European civilization. The principle of the primordial right of race is as narrow and as fraught with danger for true progress as the principle of nations is just and legitimate.

We admit that, among the tribes and cities of the ancient world, the fact of race was of capital importance. The ancient tribe and city were but an extension of the family. In Sparta and Athens all citizens were related more or less closely to each other. It was the same among the Beni-Israel; and it is still so among the Arab tribes. But let us leave Athens, Sparta, and the Jewish tribe and turn to the Roman Empire. Here we have quite a different state of affairs. This great agglomeration of completely diverse towns and

provinces, formed in the first place by violence and then held together by common interests, cuts at the very root of the racial idea. Christianity, characteristically universal and absolute, works even more effectively in the same direction. It contracts a close alliance with the Roman Empire, and, under the influence of these two incomparable unifying agents, the ethnographic argument is for centuries dismissed from the government of human affairs.

In spite of appearances, the barbarian invasions were a step further on this road. The barbarian kingdoms which were then cut out have nothing ethnographic about them; they were decided by the forces or whims of the conquerors, who were completely indifferent with regard to the race of the peoples whom they subjugated. Charlemagne reconstructed in his own way what Rome had already built, viz., a single empire composed of the most diverse races. The authors of the Treaty of Verdun, calmly drawing their two long lines from north to south, did not pay the slightest attention to the race of the peoples to right or left of them. The frontier changes which took place in the later Middle Ages were also devoid of all ethnographic tendencies. Let it be granted that the consistent policy of the Capets managed more or less to gather together, under the name of France, the territories of ancient Gaul; yet this was by no means the consequence of any tendency on the part of their inhabitants to unite themselves with their kindred. Dauphiné, Bresse, Provence, and Franche-Comté no longer remembered any common origin. The consciousness of Gallic race had been lost since the second century A.D., and it is only in modern times, and retrospectively, that the erudite have unearthed the peculiarities of the Gallic character.

Ethnographic considerations have, therefore, played no part in the formation of modern nations. France is Celtic, Iberic, and Germanic. Germany is Germanic, Celtic, and Slav. Italy is the country in which ethnography finds its greatest difficulties. Here Gauls, Etruscans, Pelasgians, and Greeks are crossed in an unintelligible medley. The British Isles, taken as a whole, exhibit a mixture of Celtic and Germanic blood, the proportions of which are particularly difficult to define.

The truth is that no race is pure, and that to base politics on ethnographic analysis is tantamount to basing it on a chimera. The noblest countries, England, France, and Italy, are those where breeds are most mixed. Is Germany an exception in this respect? Is she a purely Germanic country? What a delusion to suppose it! All the South was Gallic; and all the East, starting from the Elbe, is Slav. And as for those areas which are said to be really pure from the racial point of view, are they in fact so? Here we touch on one of those problems concerning which it is most important to have clear ideas and to prevent misunderstandings.

Discussions on race are endless, because the word "race" is taken by historians who are philologists and by anthropologists with physiological leanings in two quite different senses.<sup>2</sup> For the anthropologists race has the same meaning as it has in zoology: It connotes real descent—blood relationship.

Now the study of languages and history does not lead to the same divisions as physiology. The words "brachycephalic" and "dolichocephalic" find no place either in history or philology. Within the human group that created the Aryan tongues and the Aryan rules of life there were already brachycephalics and dolichocephalics; and the same must be said of the primitive group that created the languages and institutions termed Semitic. In other words, the zoological origins of the human race are vastly anterior to the origins of culture, civilization, and language. The primitive Aryan, Semitic, and Turanian groups were joined in no physiological unity. These groupings are historical facts which took place at a certain period, let us say fifteen or twenty thousand years ago; whereas the zoological origin of the human race is lost in impenetrable darkness. What the sciences of philology and history call the Germanic race is assuredly a quite distinct family among humankind. But is it a family in the anthropological sense? Certainly not. The distinctive German character appears in history only a very few centuries before Jesus Christ. Obviously the Germans did not emerge from the earth at that period. Before that time, when mingled with the Slavs in the great shadowy mass of Scythians, they possessed no distinctive character. An Englishman is certainly a type in the whole sum of humankind. Now the type of what is very incorrectly termed the Anglo-Saxon race<sup>3</sup> is neither the Briton of the time of Caesar, nor the Anglo-Saxon of Hengist, nor the Dane of Canute, nor the Norman of William the Conqueror: It is the sum total of all these. The Frenchman is neither a Gaul, nor a Frank, nor a Burgundian. He is that which has emerged from the great cauldron in which, under the eye of the king of France, the most diverse elements have been simmering. As regards his origin, an inhabitant of Jersey or Guernsey differs in no way from the Norman population of the neighbouring coast. In the eleventh century the most piercing gaze would not have perceived the slightest difference on either side of the strait. Trilling circumstances decided Philip Augustus not to take these islands together with the rest of Normandy. Separated from each other for nearly seven hundred years, the two peoples have become not only foreign to each other, but entirely dissimilar. Race, then, as we historians understand it, is something that is made and unmade. The study of race is of prime importance for the man of learning engaged on the history of humankind. It is not applicable to politics. The instinctive consciousness which has presided over the drawing of the map of Europe has held race to be no account, and the leading nations of Europe are those of essentially mixed breed.

The fact of race, therefore, while vitally important at the outset, tends always to become less so. There is an essential difference between human history and zoology. Here race is not everything, as it is with the rodents and the cats; and one has no right to go about feeling people's heads, and then taking them by the throat and saying, "You are related to us; you belong to us!" Apart from anthropological characteristics, there are such

things as reason, justice, truth, and beauty, which are the same for all. For another thing, this ethnographic policy is not safe. Today you may exploit it against others; and then you see it turned against yourself. Is it certain that the Germans, who have so boldly hoisted the banner of *ethnography*, will not see the Slavs arrive and, in their turn, analyze village names in Saxony and Lusatia; or seek out the traces of the Wiltzes or the Obotrites; or say that they have come to settle accounts arising out of the massacres and wholesale enslavements inflicted upon their ancestors by the Ottos? It is an excellent thing for us all to know how to forget.

I like ethnography very much, and find it a peculiarly interesting science. But as I wish it to be free, I do not wish it to be applied to politics. In ethnography, as in all branches of learning, systems change. It is the law of progress. Should nations then also change together with the systems? The boundaries of states would follow the fluctuations of the science; and patriotism would depend on a more or less paradoxical dissertation. The patriot would be told: "You were mistaken: You shed your blood in such-and-such a cause; you thought you were a Celt; no, you are a German." And then, ten years later, they will come and tell you that you are a Slav. Lest we put too great a strain upon science, let us excuse the lady from giving an opinion on problems in which so many interests are involved. For you may be sure that, if you make her the handmaid of diplomacy, you will often catch her in the very act of granting other favours. She has better things to do: So let us ask her just to tell the truth.

2. What we have said about race, applies also to *language*. Language invites union, without, however, compelling it. The United States and England, as also Spanish America and Spain, speak the same language without forming a single nation. Switzerland, on the contrary, whose foundations are solid because they are based on the assent of the various parties, contains three or four languages. There exists in man a something which is above language: and that is his will. The will of Switzerland to be united, in spite of the variety of these forms of speech, is a much more important fact than a similarity of language, often attained by vexatious measures.

It is to the honour of France that she has never tried to attain unity of language by the use of coercion. Is it impossible to cherish the same feelings and thoughts and to love the same things in different languages? We were talking just now of the objections to making international politics dependent on ethnography. It would be no less objectionable to make them depend on comparative philology. Let us allow full liberty of discussion to these interesting branches of learning, and not mix them up with what would disturb their serenity. The political importance ascribed to languages comes from regarding them as tokens of race. Nothing could be more unsound. In Prussia, where nothing but German is now spoken, Russian was spoken a few centuries ago; in Wales, English is spoken; in Gaul and Spain, the original speech of Alba Longa; in Egypt, Arabic; and we could cite any

number of other examples. Even in the beginning of things, similarity of language did not imply that of race. Take the proto-Aryan or proto-Semitic tribe. It contained slaves speaking the same language as their masters, whereas the slave very often differed from his master in race. We must repeat that these divisions into Indo-European, Semitic, and other languages, which have been laid down by comparative philologists with such admirable acumen, do not coincide with those laid down by anthropology. Languages are historical formations which afford little clue to the descent of those who speak them and which, in any case, cannot be permitted to fetter human liberty, when it is a question of deciding with what family one is to be linked for life and death.

This exclusive importance attributed to language has, like the exaggerated attention paid to race, its dangers and its objections. If you overdo it, you shut yourself up within a prescribed culture which you regard as the national culture. You are confined and immured, having left the open air of the great world outside to shut yourself up in a conventicle together with your compatriots. Nothing could be worse for the mind; and nothing could be more untoward for civilization. Let us not lose sight of this fundamental principle that man, apart from being penned up within the bounds of one language or another, apart from being a member of one race or another, or the follower of one culture or another, is *above* all a reasonable moral being. Above French, German, or Italian culture, there stands human culture. Consider the great men of the Renaissance. They were neither French, nor Italian, nor German. By their intercourse with the ancient world, they had rediscovered the secret of the true education of the human mind, and to that they devoted themselves body and soul. How well they did!

3. Nor can religion provide a satisfactory basis for a modern nationality. In its origin, religion was connected with the very existence of the social group, which itself was an extension of the family. The rites of religion were family rites. The religion of Athens was the cult of Athens itself, of its mythical founders, its laws and customs. This religion, which did not involve any dogmatic theology, was, in the full sense of the words, a state religion. Those who refused to practice it were not Athenians. At bottom it was the cult of the personified Acropolis; and to swear on the altar of Aglauros<sup>1</sup> amounted to an oath to die for one's country. This religion was the equivalent of our drawing lots for military service or of our cult of the national flag. To refuse to participate in such cult would have been tantamount to a refusal nowadays to serve in the army, and to a declaration that one was not an Athenian. On the other hand, it is clear that such a cult as this meant nothing for those who were not Athenians; so there was no proselytizing to compel foreigners to accept it, and the slaves of Athens did not practice it. The same was the case in certain small republics of the Middle Ages. No man was a good Venetian if he did not swear by St. Mark; nor a good citizen of Amalfi if he did not set St. Andrew above all

the other saints in Paradise. In these small societies, acts, which in later times became the grounds for persecution and tyranny, were justifiable and were as trivial as it is with us to wish the father of the family many happy returns of his birthday or a happy new year.

What was true of Sparta and Athens was no longer so in the kingdoms that emerged from the conquests of Alexander, and still less so in the Roman Empire. The persecutions carried out by Antiochus Epiphanes to induce the Eastern world to worship the Olympian Jove, like those of the Roman Empire to maintain the farce of a state religion, were mistaken, criminal, and really absurd. Nowadays the situation is perfectly clear, since the masses no longer have any uniform belief. Everyone believes and practices religion in his own way according to his capacities and wishes. State religion has ceased to exist; and a man can be a Frenchman, an Englishman, or a German, and at the same time a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Jew, or practice no form of worship at all. Religion has become a matter to be decided by the individual according to his conscience, and nations are no longer divided into Catholic and Protestant. Religion which, fifty-two years ago, was so important a factor in the formation of Belgium, is still equally so in the heart of every man; but it is now barely to be reckoned among the reasons that determine national frontiers.

4. Community of interest is certainly a powerful bond between men. But do interests suffice to make a nation? I do not believe it. Community of interest brings about commercial treaties. Nationality, which is body and soul both together, has its sentimental side: And a Customs Union is not a country.

5. Geography, and what we call natural frontiers, certainly plays a considerable part in the division of nations. Geography is one of the essential factors of history. Rivers have guided races: Mountains have impeded them. The former have favoured, while the latter have restricted, historic movements. But can one say, as some people believe, that a nation's boundaries are to be found written on the map, and that it has the right to award itself as much as is necessary to round off certain outlines, or to reach such-and-such a mountain or river, which are regarded as in some way dispensing the frontier *a priori*? I know no doctrine more arbitrary or fatal than this, which can be used to justify all kinds of violence. In the first place, is it the mountains, or is it the rivers that constitute these alleged natural frontiers? It is indisputable that mountains separate; but rivers tend rather to bring together. Then again all mountains cannot divide states. Which are those that separate and those that do not? From Biarritz to Tornea there is not one estuary which is more like a boundary than another. If History had so decreed, then the Loire, the Seine, the Meuse, the Elbe, and the Oder would have, as much as the Rhine has, this character of national frontier, which has been the cause of so many infringements of that fundamental right, which is the will of men. People talk of strategic grounds. Nothing is absolute; and it is evident that much must be conceded to necessity. But

these concessions must not go too far. Otherwise, everyone will demand what suits him from a military point of view and we shall have endless warfare. No; it is not the soil any more than the race which makes a nation. The soil provides the substratum, the field for struggle and labour: Man provides the soul. Man is everything in the formation of this sacred thing that we call a people. Nothing that is material suffices here. A nation is a spiritual principle, the result of the intricate workings of history; a spiritual family and not a group determined by the configuration of the earth.

We have now seen those things which do not suffice to create such a spiritual principle. They are race, language, interests, religious affinity, geography, and military necessity. What more then is required? In view of what I have already said, I shall not have to detain you very much longer.

### III

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which are really only one, go to make up this soul or spiritual principle. One of these things lies in the past, the other in the present. The one is the possession in common of a rich heritage of memories; and the other is actual agreement, the desire to live together, and the will to continue to make the most of the joint inheritance. Man, gentleman, cannot be improvised. The nation, like the individual, is the fruit of a long past spent in toil, sacrifice, and devotion. Ancestor worship is of all forms the most justifiable, since our ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, and glory—I mean real glory—these should be the capital of our company when we come to found a national idea. To share the glories of the past, and a common will in the present; to have done great deeds together, and to desire to do more—these are the essential conditions of a people's being. Love is in proportion to the sacrifices one has made and the evils one has borne. We love the house that we have built and that we hand down to our successors. The Spartan song "We are what ye were, and we shall be what ye are," is, in its simplicity, the abridged version of every national anthem.

In the past, a heritage of glory and of grief to be shared; in the future, one common plan to be realized; to have suffered, rejoiced, and hoped together; these are things of greater value than identity of custom-houses and frontiers in accordance with strategic notions. These are things which are understood, in spite of differences in race and language. I said just now "to have suffered together," for indeed common suffering unites more strongly than common rejoicing. Among national memories, sorrows have greater value than victories; for they impose duties and demand common effort.

Thus we see that a nation is a great solid unit, formed by the realization of sacrifices in the past, as well as of those one is prepared to make in the future. A nation implies a past; while, as regards the present, it is all contained in one tangible fact, viz., the agreement and clearly expressed desire

to continue a life in common. The existence of a nation is (if you will forgive me the metaphor) a daily plebiscite, just as that of the individual is a continual affirmation of life. I am quite aware that this is less metaphysical than the doctrine of divine right, and smacks less of brute force than alleged historic right. According to the notions that I am expounding, a nation has no more right than a king to say to a province: "You belong to me; so I will take you." A province means to us its inhabitants; and if anyone has a right to be consulted in the matter, it is the inhabitant. It is never to the true interest of a nation to annex or keep a country against its will. The people's wish is after all the only justifiable criterion, to which we must always come back.

We have excluded from politics the abstract principles of metaphysics and theology; and what remains? There remains man, with his desires and his needs. But you will tell me that the consequences of a system that puts these ancient fabrics at the mercy of the wishes of usually unenlightened minds, will be the secession and ultimate disintegration of nations. It is obvious that in such matters no principles should be pushed too far, and that truths of this nature are applicable only as a whole and in a very general sort of way. Human wishes change indeed: But what in this world does not? Nations are not eternal. They have had beginnings and will have ends; and will probably be replaced by a confederation of Europe. But such is not the law of the age in which we live. Nowadays it is a good, and even a necessary, thing that nations should exist. Their existence is the guarantee of liberty, which would be lost, if the world had but one law and one master.

By their various, and often contrasting, attainments, the nations serve the common task of humanity; and all play some instrument in that grand orchestral concert of mankind, which is, after all, the highest ideal reality that we attain. Taken separately, they all have their weak points; and I often tell myself that a man who should have the vices that are held to be virtues in nations, a man battenning on empty glory, and so jealous, selfish, and quarrelsome as to be ready to draw his sword at the slightest provocation, would be the most intolerable creature. But such discordant details vanish when all is taken together. What sufferings poor humanity has endured and what trials await it yet! May it be guided by the spirit of wisdom and preserved from the countless dangers that beset the path!

And now, gentlemen, let me sum it all up. Man is the slave neither of his race, nor his language, nor his religion, nor of the windings of his rivers and mountain ranges. That moral consciousness which we call a nation is created by a great assemblage of men with warm hearts and healthy minds: And as long as this moral consciousness can prove its strength by the sacrifices demanded from the individual for the benefit of the community, it is justifiable and has the right to exist. If doubts arise concerning its frontiers, let the population in dispute be consulted: for surely they have a right to a say in the matter. This will bring a smile to the lips of the

transcendental politicians, those infallible beings who spend their lives self-deception and who, from the summit of their superior principles, cast pitying eye upon our commonplaces. "Consult the population! Stuff a nonsense! This is only another of these feeble French ideas that aim replacing diplomacy and war by methods of infantile simplicity." Well, gentlemen, let us wait a while. Let the kingdom of the transcendentalists end for its season; and let us learn to submit to the scorn of the mighty. It may be, that after many fruitless fumbings, the world will come back to its modest empirical solutions. The art of being right in the future is, at certain times, the art of resigning oneself to being old-fashioned.

## NOTES

1. The House of Savoy owes its royal title solely to the possession of Sardinia (1720).
2. This point has been further dealt with in a lecture, a summary of which can be seen in the journal of the French Scientific Association, 10 March 1878.
3. Germanic elements are not much more important in the United Kingdom than they were in France at the time when she possessed Alsace and Metz. The Germanic language prevailed in the British Isles solely because Latin had not completely ousted the Celtic forms of speech there, as was the case in the Gauls.
4. Aglauros, who gave her life to save her country, represents the Acropolis itself.