

## "What Does Patriotism Mean?"

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I am to define what is meant by patriotism. It's a ticklish question. Patriotism is an emotion; and like all emotions, it does not lead people towards sweet reasonableness. If you begin to argue with intensely patriotic people they get exceedingly angry, and you'll be lucky if they don't end by insinuating that you must be a treasonable and traitorous fellow even to want to argue about it.

What, then, is patriotism? I suggest to you at the start that it is not nationalism. Patriotism is the love of one's country and the desire to serve it. Nationalism is patriotism plus the urge to assert that one's country is better than any other country, and that one's fellow countrymen are wiser and braver and altogether more desirable than the people of any other country.

This becomes clearer if one looks at some examples. When the Germans sing "Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles" (i.e., Germany, Germany above all other countries) they are being nationalistic. When the Jews told the world 2,000 years ago that they were God's chosen people above all others, they were being nationalistic. So are the Japanese when they call themselves "sons of heaven" and regard all other peoples as only fit to be their lackeys. When Rudyard Kipling, in his otherwise splendid Recessional Hymn, contemptuously refers to other nations as "lesser breeds without the law," then Rudyard Kipling is being not patriotic, but nationalistic. And so are you, and so am I, whenever our enthusiasm leads us to make use of that dreadful slogan, "My country—right or wrong." For if that means anything, it means the end of any possibility of international morality. All sense of national righteousness goes by the board, and we are left facing other nations in a relationship in which the only thing that counts is naked might. I suggest to you, therefore, that true patriotism is not nationalism. For true patriotism cannot flourish except in a free national life; and modern nationalism makes free national life impossible for any other country than that of the nationalist. For, if you think for a moment, you will see that Germany cannot be over all so long as America is free and unsubdued; that the Japanese cannot be the chosen sons of heaven, if they are to be at the same time one of the lesser breeds outside the law. So, unless you are going to maintain that no nationalism can be really patriotic except your own, I don't see how you can hold that patriotism and nationalism are identical.

Let me say here that I am not disparaging patriotism. I don't want to be bracketed with W. S. Gilbert's

Idiot who praises with enthusiastic tone

Every century but this, every country but his own.

True and sincere patriotism, however misguided it may seem to us when we see it in our enemies, compels our admiration. It can change ordinary men into heroes. It can burn up selfishness in a white blaze of devotion.

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All this we can allow; but, if we are truthful, we must admit that there is no human emotion that can be more readily pretended than patriotism. Men and women can hide false and unlovely things like greed, cruelty, hate and pride by throwing over them a cloak of patriotism. The inner conviction of inferiority that we have when we are mean and selfish and cruel, demands that we shall don this cloak of patriotism to hide these defects from others, and indeed from ourselves. You know how true this is. We saw it in the last war. We can see it in this war. And, when we see, we begin to understand why old Dr. Johnson called patriotism, "the last refuge of a scoundrel." But this is false patriotism. Let us try to analyse true patriotism and see what it means and what are its implications. Some of them may surprise you. Patriotism is, we say, love of one's country. But what is it in one's country that we love? Do we love the actual land of Australia? In some aspects—yes. The harbour in Sydney with the sun flashing on the waters and the trees sloping down to the little golden beaches; St. Kilda Road at night with the lamps flashing through the fairy patterns of the trees; the hills around Adelaide that clothe themselves with fresh loveliness with every change in the light; a spring day in the bush when yellow stars shine in the grass and trees put forth their blossoming for lovers as they pass. Yes, all these we love, and it would be strange if we did not love them. But how can the dreary expanses of sun-scorched sand that make up so much of Central Australia call forth any tender emotions even in a camel, let alone a human being? Or go for a walk through the slums of any of our capital cities (oh yes, you'll find slums in all of them), and see if you love those streets of mean houses from which little children are forced to play in the streets and gutters if they are to play at all. Or go to Broken Hill or the N.S.W. coal-fields and see if you find yourself loving those places where your motherland has been disembowelled and left rotting in great obscene dumps. Plainly it is not the land of Australia as a whole that you love, but only those parts of it which are themselves lovely.

Then perhaps it is the people in this land whom we love? Maybe, but again is it all of them? We like to think of Australians as a generous easy-going folk who play fair and laugh hearty. We think with pride of the A.I.F. and its traditions; of the heroism of the men of the Navy and the Air Force; of the pluck of Don Bradman and the indomitable courage of Kingsford Smith. But if all Australians were brave and generous and fair should we hear stories of criminal assaults on young children? and of absconding clerks? Should we see the posters that our cinemas exhibit to attract custom? Would lawyers be struck off the rolls for embezzling trust funds? and jockeys be disqualified for pulling horses? Here again you must admit that we don't love all Australians, but only those whom we can admire.

Now turn from Australia to other countries. Do Americans love the United States or only parts of it? I can imagine an American loving Washington, but not the industrial suburbs of Pittsburg; or admiring Franklin Roosevelt, but hardly Al Capone; or feeling tender emotion about the maple woods in autumn, but only being bored and depressed by the Arizona desert. Or take the English. They may love Oxford and Bath, but hardly Sheffield. So do the Germans

wax sentimental over the Rhine and the Black Forest, while they forget the slums of Berlin.

In short, it is beginning to be clear that what all patriots love are the admirable things in their own country and their own countrymen. Indeed, they can only be proud of their country by thinking hard about these and forgetting about disreputable features their countries exhibit. So that really we all love an idealized picture of our countries and our countrymen. Note that. An idealized picture. Here, then, is the meaning of true patriotism. It is the love of an ideal country—not the Australia, the England, the Germany, and the Japan that *is*, but the Australia, the England, the Germany and the Japan that might be if the ideal of true patriots in those countries could be realized.

You've heard me say all this before. Well, I am saying it again, and I shall go on saying it till I die. But Sir Cecil Spring Rice said it much better than I can in the verses he wrote in 1918, on the last night he spent at the British Embassy at Washington at the end of his service for England, and scarce a month before his death. The verses begin:

I vow to thee, my country—all earthly things above—  
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love.

Then later he says:

But there's another country I've heard of long ago,  
Most dear to them that love her, most great to them  
that know,  
And soul by soul and silently, her shining bounds  
increase;  
Her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are  
peace.

If our hundred per cent. patriots in Australia could see things as Spring Rice saw them, they would not, in their anxiety to cry up their own country, concentrate only on the disreputable features of other countries. I know it is hard not to do this in war time. But when all the fighting is over, is it too much to hope that we shall try to think of Germany, for example, not only in terms of Hitler and the Nazi atrocities, but also in terms of the Rhine and the Black Forest and Goethe and Heine? For Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata will still be Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata even though Beethoven was a German. And Japanese colour prints will still be beautiful, although they are Japanese. Of course, it will mean a change of outlook for the hundred per cent. patriot in every country. The German will have to think of France, not with contempt, but as the country that produced Voltaire and Pasteur. The Americans will have to think of Columbus and Velasquez, and not of Franco when they think of Spain. The Englishman will have to think of the beauties of the Rhine as well as of those of the Thames. And Australians will have to think of Mozart, and not only of Melba. Then we should be doing what the patriots of other countries actually do. We should be picking out the features that are universally admirable in each country.

You see my point? True patriotism has its roots in those very features of a country or of its people which are universally admirable. You and I do not *want* to love the

slums or the cheating or the selfishness we find in Australia. Nor should we. Nor do we. In fact, what we love about Australia are just those things which other people must needs love about our country when they are made aware of them. This is the magic of true patriotism. It changes narrow nationalistic boasting into a wide international acknowledgement of the beauty and the goodness and the truth in the world. What we love about Australia is what other people admire about Australia. What we admire about other people and other lands are exactly the things on which those other peoples base their own patriotism.

Here is the basis for a rational psychology of international relationships. Because we love our own country so much, we shall understand why other men love their own countries so much. And having learned this, we shall resolve that no deed, no boast, no sneer of ours shall wound that gracious love of country in our neighbours which means so much to them, to us, and to the whole world.

If I seem to preach you must forgive me. This doctrine is not new. It is comprehended in a short couplet of Richard Lovelace, an English poet of the seventeenth century. What Lovelace said to his Mistress, may we be able to say to our country:

I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Loved I not honour more.