

Fernando Pessoa

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By nation I mean a civilized, or a progressive, society. But what is meant by this type of society? If we are to discuss the meaning of the word progress, we enter controversial ground, and, indeed, stray from our purpose, which is simply to define a nation and establish the conditions for its existence. If this can be done without defining progress, we shall shorten, and at the same time, clarify, our analysis. Really, the analysis of the idea of progress is not necessary; all that we need investigate, since we are investigating what a civilized society is, is what are the conditions necessary for progress.

Progress, whatever it may be, implies certain fundamental notions. The first is change, for progress and stoppage are, whatever progress may mean, incompatible notions. The second (...)

By nation is meant a civilized society coexisting with other progressive societies. That it is a society is not necessary to prove, for that is intimate to the very idea of nation. That it is a progressive society is also inherent to that idea, for an unprogressive society, if it can be described as a society, presents none of the characteristics which we are wont to look for in a nation. That it should coexist with other progressive societies seems fundamental and simple when we consider modern Europe and its division into multiple nations, but it becomes less clear when we think of applying it to ancient times, Greece for instance, and Rome. Yet, if we consider the matter well, it becomes evident that ancient Greece coexisted in itself with civilized nations; it had no civilized nations, properly speaking, outside itself, but its inner division had that effect. Rome coexisted with a decadent Greece, but that was enough, for decadent Greece was civilized, too civilized if anything.

If therefore we are to examine what a nation is and what are its conditions, we have to determine what are the conditions that can produce a civilized society coexisting with other civilized societies.

Nation is a civilized society occupying a certain territory.
It involves these three fundamental ideas, sine quibus non.

s. d.

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«O Templo de Jano».