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CH 202

Response Week 9

5 November 2016

**Group 1, Question B**

Ernest Renan attempts to briefly define what it is to be a nation in his small speech *What is a Nation?* In the beginning, he talks about how geographical features such as mountains and rivers have an influence in the way we draw our borders. But then, he goes on to describe contradictions to this idea asking “Why do some mountain ranges serve to separate and not others?” (Renan 1). He then suggests that the land a nation holds is not what defines that nation, and that a nation “is a spiritual principle resulting from the profound complexities of history — it is a spiritual family” (Renan 1). He then goes on to define what doesn’t make a nation, things such as: “race, language, interests, religious affinity, geography, military necessities” (Renan 1). This is brilliant because he is claiming that what makes a nation is intangible and essentially should not be fought for using military means.

**Group 2, Question B**

In the assigned excerpts of *All Quiet on the Western Front,* Paul describes in detail his return to the “normal” world after being deployed as a German soldier. He recounts a situation in which a man ask him about about the war, “So you come from the front? What is the spirit like out there? Excellent, eh? Excellent?” (Remarque 166). Throughout what we read Paul explains that the war is not what he, or anybody he was with, expected. He tells of how proud they all were when they first started and how they learned that a “bright button is weightier than four volumes of Schopenhauer” (Remarque 21). After returning home he starts questioning war along with his fellow soldiers. His friend Tjaden asks “Then what is the war for?” (Remarque 205) after comparing the similarities between themselves and the French soldiers they are supposed to kill. Paul and his friends feel that they aren’t fighting for themselves. They fight for people they have never met, killing people they have never met. “… I had never seen a Frenchman before I came here, and it will be just the same with the majority of the Frenchman as regards to us…” (Remarque 205).

**Group 3, Question A**

Hitler’s arguments in the first part of our assigned reading of *Mein Kampf* are bold to say the least. He is obviously influenced by Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* and uses the idea that mating between two parents of different “levels” produces offspring at lower levels than the parent with the higher level. He claims that “Such mating is contrary to the will of Nature for a higher breeding of all life” (Hitler 1). He does this without explaining how *he solely* is the one that understands the will of Nature. Using this argument he claims that racial pureness is the key to success. He goes on to state that “The Germanic inhabitant of the American continent, who has remained racially pure and unmixed, rose to be master of the continent; he will remain the master as long as he does not fall a victim to defilement of the blood” (Hitler 3). His arguments are not convincing to me, because he does not explain why Nature would want pure breeds. The only reason wolves, geese, mice exist is because their ancestors mixed with lower/higher “leveled” individuals. Nature doesn’t play a human role, it doesn’t *want* or *feel* anything. It is an idea and force larger than the human race, and cannot be influenced the way Hitler wanted.

**Group 4, Question B**

Salvador Dali captured dream-like states in his art, often using baron landscapes and contrasting perceptions of dimensions within one piece. *The Persistence of Memory* Dali questions socially-accepted truths about reality by providing a scene in which time is represented by clocks, all displaying different times, seemingly melting over various surfaces. One of the clocks is laying atop a hard to distinguish structure, a face with absurdly large eye-lashes and a large nose. Dali defined what it was to be surrealist, by capturing scenes that questioned all reality and normality, while providing questions about what “normal” really means. They question how normal life really is, and therefore pose questions about the importance of those powerful ideas influencing war and mass death in his time.

Works Cited

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