

BBC
RADIO



Downloaded from www.bbc.co.uk/radio4

THE ATTACHED TRANSCRIPT WAS TYPED FROM A RECORDING AND NOT COPIED FROM AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT. BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF MISHEARING AND THE DIFFICULTY IN SOME CASES OF IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS, THE BBC CANNOT VOUCH FOR ITS COMPLETE ACCURACY.

Lecture 2: Country Glasgow

SUE LAWLEY: Hello and welcome to the second of this year's Reith Lectures.

Today we're guests of the University of Glasgow, the fourth oldest university in the English speaking world. Founded in 1451, it predates by two and a half centuries the union of Scotland with England.

It's produced seven Nobel laureates, two UK prime ministers, and, more recently, Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

In the eighteenth century, Glasgow was a centre for the Scottish Enlightenment. In the nineteenth, trade gave it the title of Second City of the British Empire. Today, it's a place abuzz with talk of independence and the role of Scotland as a nation on its own. Proud of its history, its learning and its people, it's a good place to hear a lecture about the nature of identity.

In his series *Mistaken Identities*, the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah is arguing that the subjects we rely on in order to try to define ourselves are often wrong or misleading. He began in London talking about religious identity. In forthcoming programmes he'll be talking about race and about culture. But here, in Scotland, his subject couldn't be more topical. It's country.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the BBC's Reith Lecturer 2016 Professor Anthony Appiah.

(AUDIENCE APPLAUSE)

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Aron Ettore Schmitz was born in the city of Trieste at the end of 1861. His mother and father were Jews, of Italian and German origin, respectively. But Trieste was the main trading port of the Austrian Empire. So young Ettore was a citizen of that Empire. And whatever the words “Italian” and “German” meant when he was born, they didn’t mean you were a citizen of Italy or Germany. Ettore was nine when a unified Germany was cobbled together from a hodgepodge of duchies, kingdoms, principalities and Hanseatic city-states. When he traveled to school in Bavaria, in 1874, he was visiting a Germany that was younger than he was.

As for Italy? Ettore and Italy were practically born twins. The modern Italian state was created in the year of his birth, bringing together the Venetian territories of the Austrian Empire, the Papal States, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia. So, like his father’s German-ness, his mother’s Italian-ness was more a matter of language or culture than of citizenship. Only in his late fifties, at the end of the First World War, did Trieste become what it is today, an Italian city. So here was a man, Jewish by upbringing, an atheist who became a Catholic as a courtesy to his wife; someone who had claims to being German and to being Italian, and who never felt other than Triestine, whatever that meant exactly. Born a subject of the Austrian Emperor, he died a subject of the king of Italy. And his life poses sharply the question how you decide what country, if any, is yours.

When Schmitz came of age, the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires held sway over a vast array of diverse European peoples.

But, starting in the nineteenth century and continuing to the twentieth, many peoples who had never controlled a state were engulfed by political movements that sought an alignment between politics and peoplehood: they wanted nation-states to express their sense that they already had something important in common. So we need a name for these groups that doesn’t imply that they *already* have a shared political citizenship, and I’m going to continue to call them peoples. A *people* is a group of human beings united by a common ancestry, real or imagined, whether or not they share a state.

In 1830, the great German philosopher Hegel wrote, “In the existence of a *people* the substantial purpose is to be a state and to maintain itself as such; a people without state-formation ... has no real history.”

Hegel thought, then, that as time went on, all the peoples that mattered would gradually become the masters of their own states: over the next century that thought took hold around the world.

Today, in what we like to think of as a post-imperial age, no political tenet commands more audible assent than that of national sovereignty. “We” aren’t to be ruled by others, captive to a foreign occupation; “we” must be allowed to rule ourselves. This simple is baked into the concept of the nation itself. It helped to propel the collapse of empires and the era of decolonization. Maps were redrawn to advance the cause; even in our own time, borders have given way to it. It remains a vaunted principle of our political order. And yet this ideal has an incoherence at its heart: and that’s what I want to explore today.

To begin to understand this, ask yourself why, if everyone agrees that “we” are entitled to rule ourselves, it is often so hard to agree about who “we” are? The nationalist says, “We are a people, we share an ancestry.” But so does a family, to take the idea at its

narrowest; and the whole species, at its widest, shares its ancestry, too. So in seeking nations, where should we draw the line? The people of Ashanti in Ghana, where I grew up, are supposed to share ancestry; but so is the wider world of Akan peoples to which we also belong. There's not just Ashanti, but Akwapim, Akyem, Baule, Fante, Kwahu and a bunch more – none of which you've heard of either. (*laughter*) So if you were going for a nation state, perhaps Akan would make more sense than Ashanti: bigger may be better in modern nations, and there are twice as many Akan as Ashanti, their homes spread through southern Ghana and Ivory Coast.

But, following that thought, why not go for something even bigger, as Pan-Africanists argued, seeking to create a mega-state of all the people of African descent? Which should it be? There are no natural boundaries. So that is a first quandary, one of scale.

Even once we've picked a scale, though, not every such group *wants* to build a state together. It is said that the Celts of Brittany, Cornwall, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the Isle of Man share ancestry: but most of them don't care enough about that fact to want to act together as a people. They're not a nation. So let's posit that a nation is a group of people who think of themselves as sharing ancestry *and* care about it. Well, how do you know when you care *enough* to qualify as having a "national consciousness"?

Matching peoples to territories faces yet a third quandary. I mentioned the Akans.

But, living side by side with Akan people are people of other ancestries—Guans, for example, whose forebears migrated to Ghana a millennium ago. The logic of shared ancestry offers only three possible answers for such interspersed minorities. Annihilate them, expel them, or assimilate them, inventing a story of common ancestry to cover up the problem. All of these "solutions" have been tried in the past couple of hundred years somewhere. None of them would be necessary if we weren't trying to match states to peoples.

Deciding which nation is yours is further complicated when political boundaries keep shifting. Ettore Schmitz's experience—as a citizen of one country who became a citizen of another without leaving home—was shared by millions in the twentieth century.

In 1900, most of Central and Eastern Europe was ruled by one empire or another. After the First World War, independent nation states were delivered blinking into the light. After the Second World War, boundaries shifted again, and an Iron Curtain reshaped the map yet once more.

Meanwhile, with the partition of British India, in 1947, some 14 million people crossed the new borders between India and Pakistan: Hindus and Sikhs into India, Muslims into Pakistan. This was the largest migration in human history, even though between thirty and forty million Muslims remained in India, which, by the way, will soon be the country with the largest Muslim population in the world.

And with the end of Europe's empires, dozens more independent states in Africa and Asia appeared on the world stage. In Africa in 1945 only Egypt, Ethiopia and South Africa were independent.

Today, there are 54 independent states in the African Union. So you peer at this gleaming canvas of countries ... and you can see that the paint is still wet.

But if the global success of nationalist movements is a twentieth century phenomenon, the ideology that fueled them is only a century or so older. I think many would find that thought surprising. Human beings have long told stories about clashing tribes. The Old Testament is filled with the names of what I've been calling peoples: Assyrians, Canaanites, Chaldeans, Cushites, Philistines, and the rest. These peoples do things together. Their actions are the theme of a thousand epic tales. The Assyrians attack Israel; the Ashanti conquer the Denkyira; the Romans conquer the Greeks. These stories generally celebrate their respective peoples as a pretty terrific lot, an in-group well worth belonging to.

Recall Shakespeare's Henry V, addressing his soldiers as "you noblest English/Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof!" So why isn't that just nationalism?

The answer is that something new entered European thought toward the end of the eighteenth century. Reacting against the rationalism of the Enlightenment, Romanticism produced a great upswelling of new feelings and ideas, especially in the expanding middle classes. It brought together a fascination with conquering heroes and an engagement with folk traditions that were thought to express a people's true spirit—what German speakers took to calling the *Volksgeist* – the spirit of the folk. The Romantic philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder pursued the idea that what made the Germans a people was a spirit embodied, above all else, in their language and literature. He thought this applied to every other people, too.

Here in Scotland, Robert Burns, the Bard of Ayrshire, embodied the same attitudes: collecting and adapting the folk songs of ordinary people, composing in the language of every day. And, as literacy and print spread across great territories, ordinary people increasingly thought of themselves as sharing in the life of a vast community of fellow nationals ... united in part by reading people like Burns.

By the late nineteenth century, this romantic ideal was a platitude. Ernest Renan, the conservative French historian and patriot wrote in 1882, "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle." A thousand kilometers southeast of him, the Genoese revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini announced his nationalist mission: "awakening the soul of Italy."

In Schmitz's Trieste, though, many people might have favored keeping the Italian soul asleep.

This city was composed, like the empire, of a motley group. Most people spoke either German or *triestino*, the local dialect of Italian, but in the areas around the city many people spoke Slovenian. Italian and Slavic nationalism had to contest with educated Germans who defended the cosmopolitanism of a multinational Austro-Hungarian empire. At a dinner in honor of Richard Cobden, the English Liberal statesman, in 1847, a Herr von Bruck shouted aloud, "We are Triestines; we are cosmopolites; we ... have nothing to do with Italian and German nationalities."

Yet Ettore Schmitz, despite his German father, Teutonic education, and Austrian citizenship, wasn't deaf to Mazzini's call to awaken the soul of Italy.

Lady Isabel Burton, whose husband was the British consul in Trieste in the 1870s and 80s, reported that most of Trieste's Jews sided with what she called the "Italianissimi" – the most Italian of Italians. Schmitz followed suit. When he began his literary career, he decided to write, with great effort, in standard Italian. Though not precisely *as* an Italian. For he published under the name Italo Svevo. It means "Italian Swabian." Since Swabia is a region of southern Germany, this is a not-so-subtle reference to his double heritage.

Now we probably wouldn't know much about Italo Svevo, if it weren't for his English tutor, an Irishman who lived in Trieste from 1904 to 1920, and who had his own very complicated relationship with nationalism. His name was James Joyce, and he drew on Svevo as a model for the character of Leopold Bloom, the Jewish wanderer and hero of Joyce's masterpiece *Ulysses*.

Svevo was an early enthusiast for Joyce's writing, and Joyce returned the favor, helping to arrange the French translation of Svevo's self-published book *La Coscienza di Zeno*. No one had noticed the Italian edition very much, even in Italy. The French version, championed now by Joyce, *was* widely praised and the book justly came to be regarded as one of the great novels of European modernism.

A nice moment in *The Confessions of Zeno* (which is what the book is usually called in English) reveals the interplay of German, Italian and local Triestino identities. Zeno is in love with Ada, who is herself in love with an attractive young man with the Italian-German name of Guido Speier. When Ada introduces them, Zeno forces a smile.

Then, as he recounts it,

My smile became more spontaneous because I was immediately offered the opportunity of saying something disagreeable to him: "You are German?"

He replied politely, admitting that because of his name, one might believe he was. But family documents proved that they had been Italian for several centuries. He spoke Tuscan fluently, while Ada and I were condemned to our horrid dialect.

So our Italian Swabian expresses a certain sympathy for the *Italianissimi*, but he also conveys the allure of Trieste itself, in all its multiplicity. Zeno is, above all, a walker in the city, a boulevardier and rambler: a man always struggling with his own irresolution, always smoking his "last cigarette," always betraying his ideals, and forever scrutinizing his own prejudices and preferences like a quizzical ethnographer.

He wants to confront uncomfortable truths—to side with reality, however much it stings.

And the reality of linguistic and cultural variation within a community, Svevo reminds us, can be in tension with the romantic nationalist vision of a community united by language and culture. Indeed, this tension is the rule, rather than the exception.

Take Scotland, where we meet today. For hundreds of years this has been a country of multiple tongues (Gaelic, Lallans or Broad Scots, and English) with regional differences between the cultures of the Highlands and the Lowlands, the Islands and the mainland, the country and the city, even, dare I say it, that place 45 miles away: Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Sir Walter Scott's border minstrelsy and Burns' "braid lallans" verse have little in common with Gaelic folk song.

Many of the things that are identified with Scots culture aren't widely shared. Fewer than 60,000 Scots speak Gaelic today; it hasn't been the mother tongue of a majority of the people of Scotland in five hundred years. We think of Scotland as the land of the Kirk, but Catholics outnumber adherents of the Kirk here in Glasgow, the country's largest city. And, like most of Europe, Scotland has a long-established Jewish presence and a growing Muslim one.

Internal complexities of this sort are common throughout the world. As late as 1893, the historian Eugen Weber taught us, roughly a quarter of the 30 million citizens of metropolitan France hadn't mastered the French language. Roughly a quarter. Italy, on unification, was filled with mutually unintelligible dialects, and even now it recognizes twenty regional dialects, to say nothing of Amharic or of the Arabic of a growing number of refugees.

India and China and Indonesia are wildly diverse in their ethnicities, whether or not they acknowledge it. And, as you know, the countries of the Americas, including the United States, all *do* acknowledge to some degree their origins in a multiplicity of peoples.

Given these realities, how have we dealt with the fact that self-determination—which could disrupt any imaginable political order—remains a sacrosanct ideal? Well, with caution and inconsistency. Consider Europe's newest country. The UN recognizes the "territorial integrity" of existing states while also endorsing the principle of self-determination. Weighing the two, in 2008, the International Court of Justice declared that Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence was consistent with international law. Britain's UN representative agreed: here he said self-determination outweighed territorial integrity.

In that spirit, more than a hundred countries recognized Kosovo as a sovereign nation. The Serbs, naturally, objected, maintaining that Kosovo was the "cradle" of their national identity. And nobody spoke louder in defense of their "territorial integrity" than Vladimir Putin.

Several years later came the matter of Crimea and a certain referendum. Like cricket teams switching sides at the end of an innings, the advocates of self-determination became defenders of territorial integrity, while the great defender of territorial integrity became an advocate for self-determination.

Notice, however, that nobody directly quarreled with the premise that a people is entitled to withdraw from a polity and form its own state. Instead, Western diplomats questioned the legality and the empirical validity of the Crimean referendum. But they could also invoke self-rule *against* self-rule.

The Ukrainian people, you might argue, including those who lived in the Crimea, should all have been consulted. Indeed, was there really a Crimean people to consult? It's a time-honored strategy, since what a "people" wants always depends on where you draw the lines. One of Abraham Lincoln's arguments against Southern secession is one with China's argument against Tibetan independence and Spain's against Catalan independence: namely, that the people, that is, the majority of the citizens of the whole country, do not favor it.

My point is not that all of these cases are the same. It is rather that the ideal of national sovereignty remains a profound source of legitimacy, however obscure and unstable our definition of a people. We face here the incoherence I promised to identify at the start: Yes, “we” have the right to self-determination, but that thought can only guide us once we’ve decided who “we” are.

Earlier I described nation states emerging from an age of empire. In recent decades, many theorists of globalization predicted that the process would reverse itself: the nation state, we were told, would be demoted to middle management, a mere node in a vast transnational flux of capital and labor, of banking treaties and trade pacts, of the supranational security arrangements required for transnational adversaries, from drug cartels to terrorists. The national age was to be edged aside by the “network age.”

What’s everywhere in evidence today, instead, are the forces of resistance to this sort of globalization. Boris Johnson tapped into them when he said that Brexit was “about the right of the people of this country to settle their own destiny.” But was it the British people he was talking about? Well, then they denied that right to the Scottish people. Who are “we”?

There was certainly a chauvinist strain in Brexit nationalism. And you’ll find more overt hard nationalism elsewhere. In India, the ruling party built a following by claiming that only Hindutva, a putative unity of language, religion and culture, can bring the nation together; in Austria, the Freedom Party announces that the Austrian homeland—the *Heimat*—is held together by a German heritage. In Hungary, Poland and elsewhere, ruling parties have made similar avowals; they defend “Christian values” against Middle Eastern migrants, denounce the “eurocrats,” and extol the purity of national heritage. In *their* political imagination, the network is definitely down. And in asserting these nationalisms, they deny religious and ethnic minorities like the Roma an equal place within the nation.

These vectors of reaction have their precursors.

You won’t be surprised to hear that Ettore Schmitz, given his penetrating realism, was little moved by such preachments of purity. Late in his life, the Italian state started to pressure new nationals like him to adopt Italian surnames. Schmitz volunteered to change his name to his pen name, Italo Svevo. They said no: the new Italian name had to be a dictionary translation of the old name. Schmitz walked away. “I’ve got two names already; why do I need a third?” he grumbled. His enthusiasm for Italian-ness had its limits. But once we reject the notion that some natural unity gives countries their shape, we’re left with a puzzle. How *do* we hold countries together?

Well my father, an anti-colonial firebrand, a leader in Ghana’s independence struggle, once published a newspaper article headed, “Is Ghana Worth Dying For?” His answer, of course, was yes. And it wasn’t an abstract issue for him. As an occasional political prisoner, he once narrowly averted an appointment with a firing squad. Yet what, exactly, would my patriotic father have been dying *for*?

Ghanaians speak eighty or so languages; our religious diversity is all over the map—Accra, our capital, has one of the largest Nichiren Shoshu Buddhist Temples outside of Japan, along with a spanking new, huge Mormon Temple. And Ghanaians *live* all over the map too: hundreds of thousands in Nigeria, close to a hundred thousand in the United States

and the United Kingdom, and thousands in the Netherlands, South Africa and a host of other countries.

Because of this diversity and diffusion, Ghanaians are well aware that they are not a Herderian people, with one history and culture, and a single unifying *Volkgeist*. But that doesn't stop anyone from thinking of themselves as Ghanaian at elections, or when they travel abroad with their Ghanaian passports, or when they are following the Olympics or the World Cup. You do not have to come from Ashanti, as I do, to be proud of Kofi Annan, or Fante to take pride in the novels of Ama Ata Aidoo. And kente, the fabulous silk fabric, woven in Bonwire, near Kumasi, is now worn proudly by Ghanaians around the world. And so Ghanaians are slowly becoming a people, drawn together over a few decades, as the Scots have been over centuries, by living together under a single government. It's the process that matters.

For my father, then, national consciousness wasn't a mineral to be excavated, like bauxite; it was a fabric to be woven, like kente.

He would have agreed with Svevo's observation that "inventing is a creation, not a lie." National identity doesn't require that we are all already the same. Still, for the purposes of government, citizens need to have languages in common. In developing national education, a state has to decide which dialects of which languages should be taught. It would be nice if the history taught explained why *this* people was gathered in *this* state; and a government, concerned to get citizens acting and feeling together, would like a story that connects them. With a diverse population, filigreed with potentially divisive local histories and traditions, it might be necessary to glide over conflictual claims on the truth. As Ernest Renan said more than a century ago, "Forgetting and, I would even say, historical error, is an essential element in the creation of a nation."

Recognize that nations are invented and you'll see they're always being *reinvented*. Once, to be English, you had to imagine your ancestors were recorded a millennium ago in the Doomsday Book. Now a Rohit or a Pavel or a Muhammad or a Kwame can be English. Once the Anglican Church defined Englishness; now an array of creeds can be embodied in the teams who play for England in the Test Match. Today, a brown-skinned Scot, whose grandfather came from Mumbai, can take pride in the Scottish Enlightenment or thrill to the tale of Bannockburn.

But, as Renan also argued, what really matters in making a nation, beyond these shared stories, is, as he said, "the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life." "A nation's existence (he went on) "is, if you will pardon the metaphor, a daily plebiscite." What makes "us" a people, ultimately, is a commitment to governing a common life *together*.

The challenge this poses for liberal democracies is formidable. Liberal states depend upon a civic creed that's both potent and lean—potent enough to give significance to citizenship, lean enough to be shared by people with different religious and ethnic affiliations. The Romantic state could pride itself on being the emanation of one *Volk* and its primordial consciousness; the liberal state has to get by with a good deal less magic. The Romantic state could boldly identify itself with a people's Will; liberal states must content themselves with a general willingness. The romantic state rallies its citizens with a stirring cry: "One people!" The liberal state's true anthem is: "We can work it out."

And often enough, we can. We've long known in America—as most people surely know here in Scotland—that we can hang together without a common religion or even delusions of common ancestry.

Nor need we agree about everything: Europe or Brexit, Edinburgh or Glasgow, Labour or Tory or SNP or even about something important: Rangers or Celtic. *(laughter)*

I have no dog in the fight over Scottish independence. But let the argument not be made in terms of some ancient spirit of the Folk; the truth of every modern nation is that political unity is never underwritten by some pre-existing national commonality. What binds citizens together is a commitment, through Renan's daily plebiscite, to sharing the life of a modern state, united by its institutions, procedures, and precepts.

My father used to celebrate Burns night. Even after an evening of knocking back the whiskey, though, he wasn't deluded into thinking he was a Scot. *(laughter)* He just admired the poet's principles, alongside his poetry.

Because when Burns had Robert the Bruce ask for his follower's allegiance he wisely did it not in the name of a Scottish identity but in the name of Freedom. (And you will forgive me if I read it in my own dialect.)

Who, for Scotland's king and law,
Freedom's sword will strongly draw
Freeman stand, or Freeman fall
Let him follow me.

As ardently as he felt the romance of the national spirit, Burns realized here that Scotland was not a fate but a project.

Today, as a wave of right-wing nationalism surges across Europe once more, I think about how fragile liberal pluralism can seem.

And I think too, as you might expect, of Italo Svevo, a man who, like Zeno, his greatest creation, was never happier than walking among Trieste's diverse neighborhoods—an inveterate ironist who thrived on being sort-of Jewish, sort-of German, and, in the end, only sort-of Italian. For Svevo, life was a dance with ambiguities. And when fascism convulsed Europe after his death, his kin were dashed against forces that detested ambiguity and venerated certainty—his Catholic wife Livia was forced to register as a Jew, his grandsons were shot as partisans or starved in camps.

And yet, in the canons of our culture, Italo Svevo is still with us. True, the tolerant, pluralist, unsentimental, liberal modernity he embodied is under attack. But don't bet against the spirit of Svevo ... for I believe Italo Svevo with his clear-eyed vision, has reality on his side.

Thank you.

(AUDIENCE APPLAUSE)

SUE LAWLEY: Professor Appiah, thank you very much indeed.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Thank you.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to open this up to our audience here in Glasgow University Sir Charles Wilson Theatre. So who would like to start with a question for Anthony? I can see a hand up.

PAULINE HOUSTON: I am Pauline Houston from TEDx Glasgow, which is the independent part of Ted Talks. Just listening to everything you said there about the confusion around the definition of nation, why is it do you think that people are still very passionately aligned to that kind of romantic view of what one nation is?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: That's a great question. I think people are passionately aligned with all the mistaken views that I'm going to challenge over the next lectures (*laughter*) and I think that part of the answer has to do with a very important feature of our social psychology, a feature of our evolved psychology that developed over probably hundreds of thousands of years, which is that we need "us'es" to 'thems', and complicated stories make fixing the us really hard and so we prefer simpler stories. And the story that was invented in the eighteenth century of the nation with the single spirit is a nice, simple story. It's not true of anywhere, and I think if you wanted to make it true you'd have to engage in the kind of barbarism that we saw in the middle of the twentieth century.

SUE LAWLEY: But people form nations because they need them, don't they? I mean that's why you know during the Brexit debate the whole business of take your country back had such appeal.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Well I would like people to be clear when they say that about what they think they need it *for*. And I think that, as I said, given the complex enmeshment of everybody nowadays in these transnational structures, some of the things people want it for, you can't get, you can't have anymore.

SUE LAWLEY: Well like you can't shut Mexicans out of the United States.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: (*over*) You can't shut Mexicans ...

SUE LAWLEY: (*over*) But it's a border thing, isn't it?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Well ...

SUE LAWLEY: You know the whole business of borders is what fuelled the Brexit debate and it's to an extent what's fuelling the American presidential election.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Right. And, as I said, there's a nasty side to that which has to do with other things, which I'll also be talking about later, like you know racism in the case of the Mexican border.

SUE LAWLEY: Sure, rightly or wrongly, but all I'm saying is that peoples tend maybe when they're feeling threatened to want to put up walls and borders and patrol themselves.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Yes and I would ...That's what Svevo's useful for – to remember that you can live in a world without that and have a good time.

SUE LAWLEY: Yeah?

ADAM RAMSAY: My name's Adam Ramsay and I run the UK section of a website called Open Democracy. My question is for those of us who believe in what you call the spirit of Svevo - in multiculturalism, in open borders, in tolerance - are we better engaging in that process of national myth-making, in trying to follow Nicola Sturgeon's lead in saying here in Scotland we are Scottish and that means everyone who chooses to live here, or are we better attempting to reject the idea of nation entirely?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: I think it would be close to hopeless to reject the idea of nation entirely given the way the world is. But to defend a kind of nationalism that is open in that way, it's worth remembering that I mentioned the German philosopher, which is the sort of thing philosophers do, but Herder was both a German patriot, nationalist, and a cosmopolitan. He believed both in creating Germany before Germany existed and in the right of the Slavic peoples to develop their own nationalities. And more than that, he believed that German culture, the thing that he was about defending, was essentially required to be open. He once claimed Shakespeare as one of the great German writers. Certainly Shakespeare had a huge influence on German literature, he had fantastic influence on German literature, and he was proud of people like Goethe who .. one of whose most powerful poetic cycles is called the *West East Diwan* and it's inspired by a Persian poet, by Hafiz. So I think that you can combine a sense of this shared commitment, forward going commitment as Scots or as Ghanaians with a sort of relaxed sense of what that means, which includes space for people who aren't Scottish already or Ghanaian already, and includes the notion that Ghana and Scotland are both going to be internally quite diverse – as they have been, in both cases, all along.

SUE LAWLEY: Isn't that what the SNP attempts to do essentially though if it wants independence for Scotland but it wants to be part of the wider cross-cultural body that's the EU?

ADAM RAMSAY: I would argue that is what they at least try and do. I think there are some problems with that, but I suppose for me there is an attraction to one government attempting to do nationalism in an open way and using that as a strategy versus another government. I have a quick follow-up question if I may. Does that lead to a position on any future independence referendum if you look at the different nationalisms that we're currently experiencing here in Scotland right now?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: I said I don't have a dog in the fight over Scottish independence ...

SUE LAWLEY: I knew he was going to duck that one..

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: ... and I do mean that because I think it's up to the people who are in this daily plebiscite to decide what they want to do. But I would want to say one thing about this, which is that I believe that when the nation state was first conceived in the eighteenth century people developed theories of sovereignty which are totally irrelevant to the current circumstances of the world. Whether or not you are an

independent sovereign state in this modern way, you're going to have to live with the World Trade Organisation, you're going to have to live with the UN, you're going to have to live with FAO and UNESCO and all the transnational structures. You're going to have to live with the fact that accounting standards are made by accountants, not all of whom live in Scotland. You need to be clear about what the stakes are for you.

SUE LAWLEY: Question here.

PAT KANE: My name is Pat Kane. I'm a writer and musician. This is a statement by Theresa May, the prime minister of the country. I'd like your response to it please. "If you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere." What is your response to that statement?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Well.. no, perhaps, would be ...
(laughter/applause) Again my old friend Herder is a great model here. He was a cosmopolitan, cosmopolitese citizen of the world, but he was also a German patriot. I've defended what's sometimes called 'cosmopolitan patriotism' and I think that I'm profoundly loyal to lots of ... to more than one state actually, but certainly to one. I'm a citizen of the United States. I'm glad to be a citizen of the United States. I get one vote in that election that's coming up and you can guess which way it's going to go. *(laughter)* So I do think that you can be, as I am - I'm the author of a book called *Cosmopolitanism*, I'm a defender of cosmopolitanism – but I have ... you have to understand cosmopolitanism as combining respect for the local with respect for the global. It can't be all pushed off to the global and I'm against pushing it all off to the local as well.

AMEER IBRAHIM: Hello there. My name's Ameer Ibrahim and I'm President of Glasgow University Students' Representative Council. My question is you know what are your views on the distinctions between nationalism and patriotism? And also, is nationalism something that can be an innate trait of an individual or is it something that is developed purely as a result of external factors?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Well I think, just to go to the second part first, I think nationalism has to be something developed because, as I was arguing perhaps too quickly and opaquely, there were ages before nationalism. This particular combination I think is a relatively modern thing with the sort of romantic sense of the shared spirit, so I don't ... I think it has to be something that's socially produced and therefore can be shaped.

SUE LAWLEY: Can you do that? Can you manufacture nationalism? Because it's such an emotional thing. When you think of the kind of iconic symbols of nationalism – the Statue of Liberty, the Gettysburg Address, Churchill's speeches – you know it's emotional; it's not intellectual at all.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Well I would resist the inclination to suppose that everything is either emotional or rational. We use reason to organise our feelings and the fact is that nationalism of this sort was the result of a lot of work. It was actually created through the work of people like Herder, through poets yes like Burns and Walter Scott *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, but also by political processes and by educational processes. I mean the great ... one of the great sources of nineteenth century nationalism was simply creating national school systems in which everybody was taught the same one dialect of the language. And that happens for example in Italy, so the official language of Italy is

called “Lingua Toscana in Bocca Romana” - so the language of Tuscany in a Roman mouth. And in fact you notice that Svevo referred to the Tuscan dialect.

SUE LAWLEY: Yes.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: As you do that, you create the possibility of a national conversation. So it takes work to create the institutions and the habits of thought that produce a national spirit. I don't think it's something ... Once you've got it, managing it can be very difficult.

SUE LAWLEY: Yes, but also I just wonder whether trying to define nationhood is like trying to define love really. You don't order that, you don't manufacture it. It kind of happens in your gut.

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Right I think that's ... I mean of course people like philosophers think that you can define love and everything else (*laughter*), but having a definition is not the same thing as being able to manage it, I'll grant you that, and I think very often we have these powerful sentiments. As I say, I feel powerful sentiments of this sort about a bunch of nations. But I do think that we can nevertheless think about it a bit and try to manage it and I do think that in that process raising young people with sort of sensible attitudes about these things is a really important part of the process.

SUE LAWLEY: Are you ready to have a quick word on - I don't know how quickly you can do this - on the difference between nationalism and patriotism?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: I think that these words are used in ways that they're sometimes just synonyms, equivalents of each other. I would like to preserve a sense of patriotism as having to do with a sense of investment in the national honour. I think that caring about what your country's doing in the world and feeling bad when it does bad things and good when it does good things, that's at the heart of the kind of morally appropriate patriotism that I think is a decent thing.

DENNIS CANAVAN: Dennis Canavan, retired politician. Some people would say thank heavens for that. (*laughter*) But anyway, does the professor agree that people are far more important than territories and if the nation state, or indeed the nation states throughout the world today are going to survive, they have got to be not ethnic nationalist states but they must be multinational, multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-faith?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: I mean broadly speaking yes. Broadly speaking, I think that, given the realities which I was trying to sketch, most modern states contain within them diversity of all the kinds that you talked about and that if you try and force everybody into a single national faith, a single national identification of an ethnic sort, you're simply going to produce terrible political problems. My father's Ghanaian, my mother's English, my brother-in-laws are Norwegian and Nigerian. One of my nephews has already married a Namibian, so we've got another bunch of people in the family. I have Jewish cousins and I have Muslim cousins. I was raised a Christian. That's unusual, that combination, but more and more people in the world are like that and they won't fit into the mono-ethnic nation. So if you speak that way, they will hate the nation and then they'll be dangerous to you, so I would recommend against it just on grounds of prudence.

SUE LAWLEY: Gentleman there.

JONTY HAYWOOD: Jonty Haywood. I'm a school pupil at Dollar Academy. Let's turn the tables. You have quite an interesting, a diverse personal history. How do you identify?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Well, as far as citizenship goes, I'm an American. When I arrive at the borders of the United Kingdom sometimes, they look at my passport and it says I was born in London and they say "Why are you travelling on an American passport?" And I say "Because I'm an American." I used to have a British passport, but I have an American passport now. But you know are my concerns, my political concerns in the world equally distributed over Korea and Australia and Japan and Nigeria? No, they're more focused on the United Kingdom and on Ghana because those are the two places I grew up. I spent a lot of time in Scotland as a child actually, not just in England. You know I care more about Scotland than I do about Lithuania. Sorry Lithuania. *(laughter)*

SUE LAWLEY: But if you had ...

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: But I'm an American ...

SUE LAWLEY: It's a long answer when people say where are you from? It's a long answer?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Yes, yes, yes.

SUE LAWLEY: Gentleman there.

LES FORREST: Thank you. My name is Les Forrest. I run a small business with my wife. My question is we live in an era where communication has never been faster. The world is dominated by social media, the sharing of ideas is immediate and across the whole world. There is massive migration of people across the world. Labour opportunities mean that people change jobs and change countries on a regular basis and have that opportunity like never before. So in the modern era, to what extent is technology driving the way that people feel about themselves? And leading on from that, to what extent is the idea that peoples identify primarily through nationhood is an idea which is approaching its sell-by-date?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: I think it is. *(applause)* But despite what one columnist in the New York Times says, it's not yet a flat world and so things look very different in different places. I spent some time this summer in a small village where my father's family ... which my father's family was connected with since the early eighteenth century. Things look very different from there. They don't have labour opportunities to go zooming around the world. They're worried about whether they're going to have electricity most of the day and whether they're going to have clean water and whether the buildings are going to be ... survive the next rainy season. So the world is still very economically uneven, unequal. And the things you're talking about are realer and realer for a larger and larger number of people – and that's great – and when they're real for everybody, I think it will be clear to everybody that while a national and a local identification are fine things and are useful for many purposes, we have complex identities and other things matter too. Which is why Herder was right- you can be a cosmopolitan and a patriot.

SUE LAWLEY: Question at the back there.

SIOBHAN FAIRHURST: Hi. My name's Siobhan Fairhurst. I'm a nurse. I just wanted to tap into that idea of personhood and where our allegiances really lie. I have a German grandmother, Irish and Welsh grandparents, English father, Scottish mother (*laughs*), so I know there's realities of economics, government, how we define ourselves so we can enter into trade deals, etcetera, but what about personhood, what about family? Where does that leave us in terms of our allegiance because I know certainly if somebody started to threaten any one of my heritages, my reality is my family and I belong to any type of nation that preaches tolerance and peace, and I want to know where that personal personhood lies for you?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Well I mean in a way the point is that national identity is just a small part of who we are for many purposes. It's not that it isn't hugely important on some occasions. Sometimes it's really important; wars happen and then you have to pick sides. But much of the time you don't get up in morning and shave as an American, you don't get up in the morning and pick your ... you know pick your breakfast cereal on the basis of your nationality. So I think there are lots of things in our lives that have nothing to do with the nation and it's really important to bear that in mind. Also I think, like you, that you can have kinds of affiliation with man... with more than one nation, as I do, but I think increasingly lots of people do. In your personal life, for example, you can think of yourself as connected with more than one place. This actually wasn't my father's view. I said that Ghanaian nationalism you know is clearly the product of new processes because Ghana's ... Ghana is younger than I am, but my father I remember when we were growing him, I asked him once why I couldn't have a Ghanaian and a British passport. And he was President of the Bar Association and he was on various constitutional commissions and I said couldn't we ... "You know you have some influence here. Why don't you change ... get them to change the law?" And he said, "Citizenship is unitary" to his own son with an English wife. (*laughs*) So you know not everybody agrees.

SUE LAWLEY: Gentleman here.

MURRAY PITTOCK: I'm Murray Pittock, University of Glasgow. Thank you very much for that lecture, Professor Appiah. You started by categorising nationalism as essentialist. You went on towards the end of the lecture describing more civic open nationalism. Isn't it just the case that nationalism isn't one thing but many, and isn't the problem that the modernist theorists of nationalism over identify romantic nationalism as the default?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: I don't know about the problem. It is a problem because when you're trying to characterise any complex historical movement that has come to operate in 190 countries around the world - and some aspiring countries as well - you're not going to be able to say something that's going to cover all the cases. But I do think that both a) that it's possible to have a different kind of nationalism that isn't, as you're suggesting, the Herderian national spirit nationalism - which is essentialist, though I don't think I used that word - and b) that, nevertheless, that way of thinking of the nation has been enormously powerful and can be very dangerous. But I agree that if you were ... if you were writing a textbook on the idea of the nation, you'd have to mention many possibilities. I do think, nevertheless, that this strand is very important and has been very influential and is in the background, if not very explicitly, of a lot of what I think of as unattractive nationalist

movements of the present. And when I mentioned the Austrian Freedom Party and the talk of the Heimat, I think that's very much in this tradition.

SUE LAWLEY: Thank you.

BEN COLBURN: Hello. I'm Ben Colburn. I'm a philosopher here at the University of Glasgow. In the independence debates a couple of years ago, this notion of civic nationalism emerged and gained great currency. I take it it's the idea that you start somewhere else from a set of shared political principles and then you construct a national identity around those rather than taking nationality as something sort of prior to politics? As an Englishman living in Scotland, I feel that I can be part of that notion of civic nationalism even at the same time as I'm excluded by this sort of deeper, more romantic, historically based notion that you discussed. I was wondering whether you thought some notion of civic nationalism might evade some of the problems that you picked out with the more maybe pathological or romantic notions that have been around for longer?

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: Yes I do have some sympathy with the thought of civic nationalism and, as you must be aware, this is one way in which a sort of liberal strand of American thought has developed over the long haul. I worry that it can be a little bit bloodless, especially if the principles are too abstract, and so my own view is that it's helpful to have narrative as well as principle that you're attracted to. And so the narrative of the American founding, as well as the principles of the American founding, construed in such a way as to make it possible to escape from the stain of slavery and racial oppression and construed in such a way as to make it possible to celebrate the fact that eventually we gave women the vote - I mean there are lots of problems with the American founding, but I think there's a way of telling that story which isn't just about principles. And I ... we're philosophers. One of the things I've learned as a philosopher is that many ideas are better gain a better grip on people if you can invent them in a story, in a narrative, so I would say national ... civic nationalism construed in a way that includes space for shared stories - Bannock Burn, right, or the story of the life of Robert Burns - those sorts of things can I think help bring people together. And they're not really principles, though I think the principles are really important, but among the principles that you have to have in a modern democratic state is one of pretty broad tolerance for differences about political matters.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to take a last question up there. Yeah?

HAIDER KHADAD: I'm a fourth year philosophy student. I'm just wondering where autonomy and individuality fit into your picture of identity? The reason why I ask is because I was adopted. My biological mother was of Sephardic Jewish origin, my father was an Arab Bedouin and I was adopted into a Catholic family, and when people say to me you know "What do you identify yourself as?", I just say "Human." So ... (*applause*)

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH: You've got to figure how to relate - all the sorts of identities I'm going to be talking about in these lectures - you've got to be able to figure out how to relate them to the lives of individual people, and you want to shape them in such a way that they can be useful generally speaking in the lives of individual people. So exclusivist notions of many of these things are not going to be useful in your life or mine and more and more people are like us. So I think we need to have more relaxed, more open notions of identity. We're doing this in many domains. Over the last couple of years, we've made huge shifts I think in this area in relation to gender because of the rise of, successful

rise of a new kind of transgender activism, and what they're saying is let's reshape gender identities in a way that allows for more of us to feel at home in them. And that's what I'm arguing for the nation. I'm not against the nation. As I said, I'm actually an American patriot, but I think it needs to be shaped in such a way that it can be useful in a productive way in the lives of more people. And the sort of chauvinist nationalism, I don't think is good for the people who do fit actually because it deprives them of that open connection which someone like Herder celebrated in his more cosmopolitan moments.

SUE LAWLEY: And with that, we must end. Thank you very much to our hosts here at Glasgow University. Do check out the Reith website where you can find transcripts, audio and much more information about the series. That's all via the BBC website.

Next week we're in Ghana, the land of Anthony's childhood, to hear the story of how in the early 1700s a little black African boy was whisked away by sea to be brought up among the white nobility in a European palace. The subject is colour.

Until then, our thanks to our Reith Lecturer 2016 Anthony Appiah and from Glasgow goodbye.

(AUDIENCE APPLAUSE)