Indisputably, new nations could be especially self-conscious in their nationalism. In 1836, the Academy of Leitrán was founded in Mexico in order to “Mexicanize” the country’s literature and make it distinct from that of all other countries. In the search for a long-standing Mexican tradition, some turned, without too much effort, to the world of Mexico before the Spanish conquest.

Did in-born traits account for the differences between nations? Some certainly spoke of nations as “races”—a tendency that would become more marked in the later nineteenth century (see 9.6). Enlightenment thinkers had sometimes categorized humanity into races, most often, however, attributing such distinctions to differences in climate. Sometimes, nationalists applied the same thinking to nations. By the early nineteenth century, however, some racial thinking had come to see racial and national distinctions as hereditary.