"GOD'S ELECT NATION" MYTH: RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR DIMENSIONS

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Abstract. The paper analyzes the religious and the secular dimensions of the "God's elect nation" myth, outlining that associating religion and mythology is one of the social-psychological mechanisms used to create and maintain the nation. The cultural mechanisms of the paradoxical reduction of religious universality to the local/national, the transformation of that which binds into that which separates are explained. The thesis is elaborated that the "nationalization" of God, whereby his transcendence is replaced by historical immanence, holds a potential to engender conflicts even between communities of the same religious confession. A sufficient number of historical instances indicate that most nations and peoples have each their own specific religious or secular myth of divine election or messianic myth of some exclusive mission or value; these myths are activated under conducive conditions. The situations that provoke feelings of ethnic or national unity and activate messianic mythologies are outlined. The religious radicalization is analyzed either as resulting from political and ethnic radicalization, from war, or as involved in these processes. The functions of intellectuals, of rationality and reason are discussed.

Keywords: "God's elect nation" myth; religious; secular; nation; ethnic; conflict; stigmatization; reason

Religious mythology and secular mythology

Myth and religion are two phenomena which are both closely linked and mutually remote, both related and separate. They are usually closely connected to each other within the constellation of elements of community consciousness produced by culture. This production of consciousness is a process in which the universal form of myth and the universality of religion are "privatized" by the community and become tied to specific forms of collective existence, such as shared territory, history, future, memory of traumas, etc. This course of linking and separation is most clearly evident in the case of that particular form of community existence that is the nation. Associating religion and mythology is one of the social-psychological mechanisms used to create and maintain the nation.

However, many scholars believe the emergence of the nation, as a specific form of community life and identity is linked to the development and results of

secularization, one of whose manifestations is the secularization of the myth of God's elect people, which in this case becomes "God's elect nation". It is paradoxical that, in this case, the "national religion", which is usually one of the great unifying religious confessions, becomes the basis, or an element, of a single nation – as it were, the nation's differentia specifica. Moreover, religion often becomes a justification for the alleged superiority, the domination, of that nation over other nations and peoples. Here, God is no longer the transcendent guarantor of equality between communities but is instead a biased subject who is partial, attached, to certain communities and displays disregard for others. As Joanna Overing writes in her article "The Role of Myth: An Anthropological Perspective": "Myths of identity are equally myths of alterity, of significant otherness..." (Overing, 1997: 16).

As Paul Tillich put it, the religion gives absolute definitions and dimensions. This provides each community with the possibility to sacralise its being as an absolute, exclusive, incompatible (in terms of territory, politics, gender, economics, etc.) with respect to another community. But in fact this peculiarity of religion becomes revived and is activated only in connection with a certain type of thinking and socio-psychological set of the group springing from complex features of its biography. It is the role of religion in that case to sacralise, to put the respectable stamp of tradition, culture, the sacred on some particular type of thinking (often "anti-", opposite type) and mental set. Incompatibility of poverty and wealth, of the powerful and the powerless, of female and male, of Serbians and Croats or Albanians, as Bulgarian and Turks etc., stated as a consequence of fundamental religious differences becomes usually insoluble with rational, consensus creating means acceptable to both sides. The conflict is put in either-or form. Each side strives for a status (territorial, cultural, political) corresponding to its religiously grounded absoluteness, hegemony. No wonder that any rational and bureaucratic procedures for reconciling interests, allowing coexistence, granting rights, etc. become hard to realise on such psycho-ideological background. As H.-G. Stobbe notes "Enemy relationships provide a structure for a world which has become confused enabling all problems to be classified within a friend/foe framework. …..enmity reduces complexity, and in so doing, it gives a sense of meaning, which is the basis for its attraction." (Stobbe, 2013: 7).

This paradoxical reduction of religious universality to the local/national, this transformation of that which binds into that which separates, comes about through a religious-mythological synthesis that constructs the myth of God's chosen nation/people. G. Shöpflin describes the types of myths that sanctify collective existence, including myths of territory, of the Golden Age, of rebirth and renewal, of foundation; among them, he devotes special attention to the myth of election which "legitimates …moral and cultural superiority to all competitors and rivals…" (Shöpflin, 1997: 31). Given the Christian origins of those myths, "...in the modern world the religious motif has been transmitted into something secular" (Shöpflin, 1997: 31).

This modernization of the mythological matrix is based on the higher capacity for unification that the ethnic/nation concept offers in modern times. The national idea justifies the greater integrating vocation of the state, which has assumed the mission of unifier on the basis of this idea. The model of the integrating, embodying the spiritual mission center is preserved in different historical conditions. In states where this sanctification is enhanced by local sanctifying mythology of a certain ruling dynasty, the conditions are created for inertia of the cult of the head of state even in secularized 20th century culture.

The power of historical mythologies is in reverse proportion to the capacity of a nation to periodically renew its social life world – its psychological attitudes, labour relations, political stereotypes; in Arnold Toynbee's words, this is the capacity to respond to external and internal challenges by using a nation's inner resources, and not by warring with near and distant nations.

National/state religion and secularization

In the view of more than a few authors, even the modern state is in need of religious legitimization, of a spirit of solidarity, in brief, of religion, but the practice of religious pluralism is often in contradiction with this need. In a situation characterized by the important role of modern technologies and the recognized economic role of the state, religion continues to have its function as a sacralized value system. It fulfills the need for a minimum of integrative values that serve to eliminate the disintegrative potential of the economy and politics (Thung, 1990: 157). According to D. Kelley, who treats of this issue in his article "Religious Innovation and Government Regulation: The Zone of Perpetual Turbulence", the customary source of legitimization in such cases are the systems that have embodied, or are still embodying, absolute meaning, that explain the nature and destination of mankind – in other words, the systems known as religion (Kelley, 1990: 138).

This "nationalization" of God, whereby his transcendence is replaced by historical immanence, holds a potential to engender conflicts even between communities of the same religious confession. Thus, the complex relations that existed in the 20th century between some Eastern Orthodox counties such as Serbia and Bulgaria, Bulgaria and Macedonia, Serbia and Macedonia, Russia and Greece, were often based on ideologies of which both the myth of God's elect and the myth of the nation's secular missionary role were active elements.

The reason of the comparatively poor presence of the religious pluralism in the contemporary world is namely the state's pursue to support the historically created, or even to form missing symbiosis between ethnos and religion, nation and religion for the purposes of strengthening the very statehood. In this context, the mono-confessional character of the given nation is potentially "favorable" circumstance for its strengthening and the strengthening of the statehood, but the way of realization of the later depends on the type of the state and its regulation: monistic or pluralistic, secular or religious etc.

According to A. Smith, the statehood, the military machinery and the organized religion, increase the sense of ethnical identity. The religion realizes it through the myths, the heroes of the ethnical community, which are heroes of the religious knowledge and traditions. Statehood and religion can also act destructively on the community – when the religious movements go beyond the ethnical boundaries, or the members of the community are separated by schism (Smith, 2000: 43 – 44). We agree with many other researchers that are looking for deeper reasons and determined grounds for the distinctive functions of the religion regarding the national identity and its non/conflicting character.

As an element of the Bible, the idea of God's elect nation and the nation's God-chosen leader (almost a god himself) goes beyond the initial national, local connotations and gradually accumulates a universalistic potential, serving as an ideal core, a universal matrix which fuels with idealistic and emotional energy the national mythologies of separate peoples converted to Christianity. But this concept sets cultural grounds or rather produces a pretext for international rivalry over the "private ownership" of the Christian God.

In fact, there is only one nation/ethnos that had achieved an initial, sacredly documented (in the Bible) religious-mythological synthesis of this kind – the biblical nation of Israel. All other peoples and self-created nations have had to form it secondarily on the basis of various kinds of cultural accumulations, including folkloric, verbal-literary, ideological, intellectual. That this process was "successful" and widespread is evidenced by developments in the 16th and 17th centuries, when Europe became the stage of messianic religious nationalism (in the Netherlands, England, Poland, etc.). But in the following three centuries, secularization did its part and substituted the religious picture of the world with a new, secular one (Smith, 1991: 133), as proven by the wave of messianic nationalism that swept across Europe between the two world wars: in that case, the "electedness", the messianic claims of many European nations were founded on non-religious – racial and ethnic – traits. And even when religious elements were part of this messianic nationalism – for example in fascist ideology – they were usually connected with paganism and mysticism, and not with the traditional religions.

The problems of secularization dominated the English-language sociology of religion in the 1960s, as J. Beckford asserts. Various and heterogeneous explanations of secularization at that time referred to theories of rationality, the structural differentiation of society, the dissociation of the social sectors. As particularly active authors with respect to this problem field Beckford points out David Martin, Karel Dobbelaere, Brian Wilson, Danièle Hervieu-Léger, and others. In their studies, the theory of secularization retains its connection with the more general theories of modernization and continues to acknowledge the decreasing role and functions of religion in the modern world (Beckford, 1990: 55). Today, the latter thesis is questioned by more than a few authors. For instance, Thomas Luckmann argues that religion is

not a transitional stage in the evolution of humankind but a universal aspect of the conditio humana. (Luckmann, 2003: 275). He finds that the theory of secularization is based on Enlightenment philosophy, adopted as a methodological basis by the founding fathers of sociology, particularly Comte and Durkheim, and he considers this "dominant paradigm" to have been a mistake (Luckmann, 2003: 276). In his article of 1990, J. Beckford drew the general conclusion, valid today as well, that the social functions of religion had decreased, but the social importance of religion, in a new form, had perhaps increased. This new form requires new conceptualization.

The secularization paradigm, which was basic in the scientific approach to religion during most of the 20th century, is undergoing serious revision today, in the time of globalization. Peter Berger considers it not a paradigmatic characteristic, but one of the cultural dimensions of contemporary religion (Berger, 2001: 445). The processes involving decrease of the unifying force of the nation-state, the revival of local forms of identity and sociality (ethnic, religious, cultural communities), of regional and transnational alliances, have served to animate religious feelings and have redefined the cultural borderlines of religion. Some of the phenomena that demonstrate most convincingly the return of religion to the global public scene are: 1). The transnational spiritual and institutional "networks" created by traditional religions and Churches, especially the Catholic Church; 2). The increasing inclusion of religious affiliation among the constituting and unifying symbols of ethnic and cultural communities and identities; 3). The appearance of religious movements and associations not committed to any religious tradition, any nation or ethnic group, but often representing a kind of synthesis, a *bricolage* of various religious ideas and practices (Casanova, 2001: 425 – 429).

It was probably such constructs and trends that led Anthony Smith to assert that "Nationalism is a secular, modern equivalent of the pre-modern myth of ethnic divine electedness" (Smith, 1991: 117). The close connection and subordination of traditional religions and Churches with/to some contemporary social-political projects, besides being a consequence of secularization, is also one of the dimensions of globalization. P. Beyer expects that two basic trends in the process of inclusion of religion in the global world will be realized, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. The first is related to the privatization of the religious, its transformation into a private matter, an element of the formation of personal identity. The other unfolding tendency is the politicization of religion and the Church, their linkage to collective (national, ethnic) identities. Religion becomes a means, an instrument, and turns into a kind of civic religion. The Church is left with a symbolic authority, while the real authority is shifted to the state (Beyer, 1999: 21 – 25); "The historical churches have lost their religious space, their sphere of legitimate action has become a national and international field, i.e. a field of conflict and collaboration with the state actors." (Zylberberg, 1990: 90). The author argues that the activity range of religious actors is determined by the general processes of political regulation, in fact it all comes down to a "political game of domination" by the state, to a "protectionist racket" (Fenn, 1990: 104).

Two decades before these trends, in the 1940s, the religious philosopher and theologian Martin Buber attempted to preserve the transcendental meaning and spirit of the basic elements of the biblical idea of the electedness of the people of Israel. In his book *On Zion. The History of an Idea*, he criticizes the "naturalization" of such ideas, their being linked to a specific territory and people, and insists primarily on their spiritual and moral implications: "the ethical element is decisive" (Buber, 1952: 13). He refers to the "disastrous errors of modern Biblical criticism to attribute the Holy to the land and to the people". According to him, this is a "primitive concept of the holy, tribalism", more a "political, theopolitical, than strictly religious concept" (Buber, 1952: XVIII). In his analysis of such ideas, he emphasizes the understanding of the connection between the biblical nation of Israel and its holy land not as a political issue of the settlement of the Jews on the respective territory but as a question of the universal, absolute character of their universal human mission: "The holy matrimony of land and people was intended to bring about the matrimony of two separated spheres of Being" (Buber, 1952: XX). Regardless of this attempt to preserve the transcendental meaning of the myth of divine electedness, in 1947, after the Holocaust and post-war developments, Buber embraced the social-political project and idea of an independent Jewish state on Palestinian territory (Gorny, 1987: 288). What contributed to this evolution of his ideas was the reanimation of the Old Testament myth of electedness, although now adopted in a secular political, "naturalized" form.

The involvement of religion in group mythology is a result of some cultural transformations: A). A doctrinal reductionism with respect to the particular religion. Group mythology eliminates the universalist human appeal of religion (each historical religion contains such an appeal) and ties it to its own origin and heroic past; B) A shift of accent from its moral and spiritual value for the individual to its group-symbolic functions; C) An activist mobilization, transformation of religious doctrine, frequently leading to blood sacrifices (Bogomilova, 2009).

Actually, myths, and particularly the myth of God-electedness, have no independent existence outside the challenges facing the respective community. They are awoken, in many cases after a long "sleep", as G.Shöpflin states: "Different myths receive emphasis at different times to cope with different challenges…" – the integrity of the group, cultural reproduction (Shöpflin, 1997: 35). Their "awakening" is also not an entirely spontaneous, impulsive process but is the result of mass exaltation or other collective passions. Myths, especially the messianic mythology of divine electedness, are amenable to a great degree to control and manipulation by entities who have a monopoly on the collective consciousness, or, as Jung would say, the collective unconscious. Among these agents who control the messianic national mythologies, are "politicians, intellectuals, the monarch, the bureaucracy, the priesthood, writers…" (Shöpflin, 1997: 25). Politicians use this type of myths to block "rational enquiry", to construct mythic enemies, to assert legitimacy, authority (Shöpflin, 1997: 27). The elite usually regards collectivist

attitudes and historical mythologies as a useful opportunity, as a source of power, as a cultural tool devised by ancestors and ready for use when polished and sharpened by propaganda. And this is true, whether the myth of the mission be revived by poetry and historical romanticism or by metaphysical philosophers, by refined theologians or by mediums.

It is not accidental that researchers of nationalism, such as Roger Brubaker and Dominique Schnapper, define it not as a normal stage of social-economic development but as an "event", as a sudden "occurrence" provoked by a certain political situation (Brubaker, 2004: 28). According to Brubaker, nationalism usually leads to the "nationalization" of all elements of public and private life, of the entire cognitive and emotional configuration of man and culture, including religion. Listing the situations that provoke feelings of ethnic or national unity and activate messianic mythologies, Schnapper includes wars, revolutions, social-political upheavals (Schnapper, 2001: 24).

However, the task of Christianity, as Tillich sees it, is not to take part in historical social transformations but to provide support for man in the face of anguish, to inspire people with the "courage to be".

Religion, myth and conflict

A sufficient number of historical instances indicate that most nations and peoples have each their own specific religious or secular myth of divine election or messianic myth of some exclusive mission or value; these myths are activated under conducive conditions (Canthen, 1997). The conflictogenic potential of both forms of myth is indisputable, especially when they are combined with economic or military might. Here the idea and feeling of otherness, of a specific identity and uniqueness, typical of all historical units, reaches an extreme and dangerous point.

Most authors studying these processes are unanimous that religion is not the basic conflict factor of ethnic oppositions and missionary mythologies; it can only be a supporting element, which in some cases intensifies conflicts but in others weakens and pacifies them. In fact, these views are an expression and result of a widespread perspective among researchers who look upon the secular form of social union – the nation state – as the form that has definitively replaced the theocratic, pre-modern one.

According to B. Harff and T. Gurr, "... religion is rarely the single and most important cause of ethnic conflict. On the contrary, religious differences are usually combined with ethnic conflicts based on national or class differences, or enhance those conflicts. For instance, the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis is a nationalist one, intensified by religious differences" (Harff & Gurr, 2004: 49). James Spickard is even more categorical: according to him, religious and ethnic divisions are often put to use by people in power, especially in semi-peripheral and peripheral countries, in order to conceal the deeper contradictions in their societies, the economic and political ones (a viewpoint that many other authors share): "There, declining state

power exposes people to threats against which they construct religious and/or ethnic primordialisms. These do not solve their problems; indeed, they leave people open to demagoguery." (Spickard, 2010: 131). These trends become forms of collective escapism from the realities of social life (Spickard, 2010: 129).

Jean Mayer (in his "justified disagreement" that religion is connected to violence) does not accept the view that religion lies at the basis of increasing violence in our times: in turning attention to the ambiguous approach to religion, to the ambivalent use of religion, he recalls the well-known thought: "We have just enough religion to hate one another, but not enough to love one another." According to Mayer, the re-instrumentalizing of religion after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the growing importance of political action based on religion, have become so intense that they resemble the situation in the 17th century (Mayer, 2002: 203).

His thesis is that Christian faith is amorphous in a sociological sense and assumes various sensual-palpable forms according to the meaning attributed to it by the believer (Mayer, 2002: 204). In history, Christianity has practiced "four typical situations": faith in fraternal community, an imperial cult, a national religion, and a voluntary association. According to him, the only means for analysis and diagnosis of the role of religion in the concrete social situation is "empirical case analysis", since there is no generally presumed theoretical answer to the question (Mayer, 2002: 205). As a state religion, Christianity is an ideological form of the political body and may use secular means to pursue its aims. Religion is not the basic factor in this explosive cocktail, the author concludes (Mayer, 2002: 206).

Mayer continues by pointing out that in the disintegrating world of minorities and majorities, a world not regulated by a state or emperor, groups cling to symbols of ethnicity and religion; but this nationalism is not a Christian one. He criticizes Samuel Huntington for linking the principles of nationalism and religion, and points to examples of wars waged between Orthodox nations, or between Catholic nations, and others in the Balkan region; he recalls the persecution by Polish Catholics of the Greek Catholics in the Ukrainian and Belorussian provinces from 1919 to 1939. Commenting on the pogroms in Nigeria in 2000, Mayer cites the opinion of one of their observers: "Religion was a mask, as always; and beneath it, there lay the struggle for power in Nigeria". In these cases, conflicts are not linked to religious symbols or dogmas (such as the question of the filioque and the bread used in the Eucharist); such symbols are only signs used to denote the enemy as someone different (Mayer 2002: 209). Religion tends to exalt and intensify the passions and fury of opposed sides. The author's conclusion is that since 1648, there have been no wars in Europe motivated by dogmatic considerations (Mayer, 2002: 210).

Turning to the contemporary Balkan experience, we see many researchers analysing religious radicalization either as resulting from political and ethnic radicalization, from war, or as involved in these processes.

I. Cvitkovic notes that the 1991 – 1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not "religious war", and the religious communities "should not only preach but also show in practice that the violence among their members is the betrayal of faith. A message should be much stronger than it has been up to now: violence in the name of Christianity, Islam, etc. is the betrayal of faith." (Cvitkovic, 2013: 48). And "This can only be achieved if all parties to the conflict learn to see themselves through God's eyes and the eyes of the other side." (Stobbe, 2013: 10).

Above ideas go beyond the confessional façade of the problem and look for the deeper causes of religious radicalization in the main confessions that determine the conflict field. Religious mobilization and opposition based on confessional differences is to a great degree a directed and manipulated process, the deeper roots of which are to be sought elsewhere. The conflict field and "temperature" of the conflict are determined by a variety of factors, among which the social-economic are particularly important. But we usually see the religious factors being pushed to the fore, for they are easily controlled and manipulated and have deep roots in the psychology of communities, are connected with passions and aggression, and create enduring inclinations to separatism and rejection of others. The social-psychological discomfort produced by multiple factors is displayed in the form of religious mobilization and intolerance. This observation reminds us of the many facets and complexity involved, and that the problem cannot be radically resolved only at the confessional and inter-confessional level.

At the same time, even religious philosophers and theologians, like Paul Tillich and Rudolf Otto, acknowledge that religion has deep "demonic" psychological layers which, once placed on the battlefield of mythologies, are reborn and reanimated. But idolatry is still faith, and the demonic holy is still holy: this is precisely the ambivalence of faith according to Tillich. Here he entirely differs from F. Schleiermacher, who recognizes the existence of a single, intimate, and lofty faith and religion as a form of perception of the universe. Tillich's view encompasses the positive and negative characteristics of religion under the integral concept of "religion", and does not attribute them to its different bearers, forms of manifestation, etc. Thus religion comes to correspond to, and be in harmony with, the ambiguity, the inner contradiction, the "fallenness" of human nature.

The view that religion is of an ambivalent nature, that it has a double cultural existence, that the feelings connected with religious experience are correspondingly ambivalent, is shared by certain classic, modern, and post-modern thinkers, like F. Schleiermacher, I. Kant, the early Hegel, H. Bergson, S. Kierkegaard, P. Tillich, E. Fromm, etc. These authors have referred to two kinds of religion, each of which has a separate definition: traditional, authoritarian, communal on the one hand, and personal, exalted, mystical on the other. The two types also have different bearers: the people, the group, the community for the first, and the religious virtuoso, the person with an "ear" for religion, the romantic, the mystic for the latter. Erich Fromm (1900 – 1980) viewed religion as correlated to and functionally connected

with (Fromm, 2005: 63 – 64): 1). The two types of human attitudes – life affirming and life denying; 2). The two kinds of experience – x-experience and non- x-experience; 3). The two kinds of human character – humanistic and authoritarian. Fromm strongly criticizes the use of religion for the purposes of group narcissism, i.e. for nationalism and religious fundamentalism. In fact, in his perspective, religion may be drawn into both authoritarian and humanistic practices, depending on the type of society and type of human character that lies at its core.

"God's elect nation" mythology, intellectuals and reason
Unlike many authors, Anthony Smith sees the positive sides to the revival of myths of divine electedness; he believes they motivate and energize the respective communities towards development and self-defence. He considers that intellectuals should be together with their people in this process, taking part in and supporting the popular myth-creating fervour. Habermas strongly disagrees with such a view. According to him, the viewpoint of the analytical observer should not merge with the discourses of the public at large. If it did, this would degrade historical science to the level of a "politics of history" (Habermas, 2004: 51). Deliberative democracy, analysed by Jürgen Habermas is a model of legitimate decision-making based on rational discussion of the problems and demands, with equal participation of all parties to the dialogue.

The secular (Z. Freud and E. Fromm) and religious (P. Tillich) perspectives on psychoanalysis also criticize nationalism as being a form of group narcissism, as representing a subjection of the individual to the country by the authorities on the basis of collective standards. In his essay "Kairos", Tillich sees a "dangerous fact" related to messianic and nationalist totalitarian mythologies – they attribute absolute, ideal status to a specific, particular historical reality (Tillich, 1995: 220). Habermas is also not satisfied by the partial, centripetal energy that characterizes the national: he believes that the citizens of the world, those who belong to a cosmopolitan community, create "a universe of moral personalities" whose legal and moral self-perception is based on the moral universalism of human rights. This is fundamentally different from the ethical-political self-perception of citizens of a national state "in the light of its history and in the context of its life form" (Habermas, 2004: 159).

In his book *The Seduction of Unreason* Richard Wolin devotes special attention to the important question of nationalist mythology and its conflictogenic potential, to the anti-rationalism of nationalist missionary mythology, particularly that involved in the fascist myth. According to him, this mythology subjugates "critical rationality and reflexive subjectivity" (Wolin, 2004: 29); "the will is more fundamental than conscious thought" (Wolin, 2004: 31); nationalist myth replaces reason (Wolin, 2004: 174); "identity and emotion become powerful organizing principles" (Wolin, 2004: 174); the nation is viewed as a primordial entity, as "a hegemonic identity, based on the chosenness/destiny of the group…" (Wolin, 2004: 175); it transcends class antagonism, "linking race, nation and state in a

new strategic Synthesis" (Wolin, 2004: 173). This particularity of collective self-perception embodied in mythology finds intellectual support in Jung's theory of archetypes and the collective unconscious, which "accorded myth and legend a superior epistemological status" (Wolin, 2004: 65). It may be supposed that Rudolf Otto's psychology of religion did the same, as it denied that reason has access to the irrational depth of religion, which remains open only to religious experience.

Richard Wolin takes issue with the underestimation of the rational in favour of the mythological and ideological elements of fascism, and sees similar tendencies in postmodernism. In the same context, Zygmunt Bauman criticizes the Enlightenment's positing of reason as instrumental, as an engineering instrument. According to Bauman, this widely accepted understanding of the function of reason opens the door to utopianism and to actual attempts being made to construct a "perfect" society, such as the "thousand-year Reich", by means of social engineering (Bauman, 2002: 106). Reason shorn of values, rationality devoid of ethics, facilitate the formation of the ideology and practice of fascism and totalitarian ideologies in general.

Thus, Z. Bauman sees the Holocaust, and every aggressive form of stigmatization of the other, as produced by instrumental rationality and the project-forming tendency of modernity, by science cut off from morality and values, by "the social production of inhumanity". Such viewpoints and insights direct attention to the duty of the social sciences, of scholars, to stand above mythological attitudes, which often go viral, especially through the mass media and the social networks, instead of sharing these attitudes, as they sometimes do.

Although recognizing the resilience and power of the human capacity to dream, to create illusory worlds (Gadamer, 1999: 102), H.-G. Gadamer, one of the great philosophers of the past century, confirms the importance of Immanuel Kant's project to place reason above God and myths; for philosophy (and social science) "should defend the specific thesis of the power of reason" (Gadamer 1999: 93).

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