

ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND NATION

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Religion and nation are significant phenomena that, in a sense, determine human social and historical essence and existence. However, the relationship between religion and nation is only marginally debated in social-philosophical, anthropologic, and sociological theories of nation, as well as in the philosophy and sociology of religion.

Anthropologists and sociologists on the one hand, claim that mutual territory, economic interests, language, culture, origin, state, consciousness, character etc. are constitutive factors of the forming of a nation, but they rarely mention religion. Religiologists and theologians, on the other hand, when discussing nation and religion, always mention a certain difference between *religion* as a universal, transcendent and eschatological entity, and *nation* as a secular and historical particularity.

However, the authors of this text remark on the relations of these phenomena in their historical becoming and development. This is especially evident in the case of the forming of Yugoslav nations.

Religion and nation, as significant phenomena, that, in a sense, determine human social and historical essence and existence, are, each for themselves, subjects of numerous socio-scientific multidisciplinary research. However, the relationship between religion and nation is only marginally debated in social-philosophical, anthropologic and sociological theories of nation, as well as in the philosophy and sociology of religion.

Although Yugoslavia is a multinational and multiconfessional state, out of 4667 registered bibliographic units in the field of religion by Yugoslav authors, only thirteen works, published between 1945 and 1981, deal with the relationship between religion and nation.¹ However, we should add that the book by Nikola Dugandžija which initiated a fruitful debate on this subject, has been published in the meantime.²

¹ See: Bosiljka Milinković, *Bibliografija radova o religiji, crkvi i ateizmu (Bibliography on Religion, Church, and Atheism)*, Zagreb, Institut za društvena istraživanja Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1982.

² Nikola Dugandžija, *Religija i nacija (Religion and Nation)*, Zagreb, Centar za kulturnu djelatnost, 1983; see, also, on it: Božo Rudež (ed.) *Religija i nacija: Idejno-teorijska rasprava o odnosu religije i nacije*. Zagreb, Centar za idejno-teorijski rad GKSKH — Kulturni radnik, 1984.

The reasons for the insufficient presence of comparative analyses of these phenomena are manifold. Anthropologists and sociologists on the one hand, claim that mutual territory, economic interests, language, culture, origin, state, consciousness, character etc. are constitutive factors of the forming of a nation, but they rarely mention religion. Scientists dealing with religion or religiologists and theologians, on the other hand, when discussing nation and religion, always mention a certain difference between *RELIGION* as a universal, transcendent and eschatological entity, and *NATION* as a secular and historical particularity. While the transcendent and eschatological character of religion is *per definitionem*, present in the very notion of religion, its universalism is a result of a specific Christian establishment and it should, therefore, be analysed in its historical context. Namely, prechristian polytheistic religions, and even the Jewish monotheistic religion from which Christianity directly arises on which it has continued to depend, by no means had a universal character. On the contrary, those were particular national religions *par excellence*. As the well known Croatian Catholic theologian T. Šagi Bunić has pointed out, it is historically certain that with Jesus Christ a new movement began, a movement which emerged from Jewish national religion and, relying upon individual personal conscience, gathered people from various nations and cultures into a new mutuality of universal character.³

However, there are suppositions that stress the probability of the Christian revolution not having exclusively a metaphysical character, but having its historical and theoretical roots in the specific organization of the social and spiritual climate of Hellenism.

As antipodes to the closed and particular *polis* which was a theoretical expression of Greek superiority to other »northern barbaric« and »southern slavish« nations,⁴ Hellenism established the *kosmopolis* as an open ecumenical union characterised by a humanistic consciousness of general equality and fraternal relations between people rationalized in their very essence by the principle of reason.

The Stoical ideal state, as it has been polemically compared to Plato's ideal state described by Zeno, knows no obstacles caused by nationality or historical state. It is the rational community of all people, the ideal worldly empire. Plutarch realised by this that philosophy theoretically constructed something that was historically begun by Alexander the Great and finished by the Romans.

On the other hand, it was namely Alexander the Great who, taking over the oriental political-theological dogma, restored the monarchist type of power: he became God's son, god-man, prince-god, trying by this to give solidarity, peace and unity to his heterogeneous cosmopolitan

³ Tomislav Šagić-Bunić, »Kršćanstvo sabire ljude, a ne nacije« (»Christianity Unites People, not Nations«) in: B. Rudež (ed.) *Religija i nacija*, p. 55.

⁴ See: Aristotle, *Politics*, VII, 1327 b.

empire. Since then, the cult of prince-god has become a constituent part of hellenistic statehood and general consciousness. The Hellenistic man, lost in a heterogeneous and an immense *kosmopolis* needed a saviour, a prince of divine power, mind and rank who would bring salvation, peace, happiness and harmony to a deranged and resigned mankind.

Christianity is, therefore, a logical consequence of the inner development of the Hellenistic world which had demanded freedom and fraternity for all people, and ecumenism with world citizenry in which class differences (inequality of slaves and citizens) and national differences (inequality of Greeks and barbarians) would be abolished.

The Christian *THEANDRISM* has the identical demand: »You are really sons of God, by your faith in Jesus Christ (...) No more: A Jew — a Greek! No more: a slave — a free man! No more: male — mefele! You are all one in Jesus Christ!«⁵

Christianity did not initially direct its universalism towards nations, but towards the individual, stressing individual consciousness and self-consciousness. That is what is meant by St. Augustine's statement that *God's state* summons its citizens from all nations, not being molested by the difference of languages, habits, laws, institutions.⁶

However, despite this original intention, Christianity proved its universal character — especially from 391, or when it became the Roman state religion by the emperor's prohibition of all the pagan cults — by spreading its influence through voluntary or forced christianizing of whole nations. By this, European barbarians became included in the Hellenistic-Roman cultural space, which *eo ipso* became the West-European cultural entirety. To say it in Hegelian manner — *Weltgeist* spread over Europe, namely due to Christian super-national universalism.

After the great geographic discoveries at the beginning of the New age, conquered nations were being Christianized with no prejudices regarding their development, and this was in the first place made possible by the universal character of Christianity. Thus, European culture definitely realised its worldly dominance for which the authentic cultures of newly Christianized non-European nations were sacrificed.

National particularism had, little by little, emerged, primarily through a religious particularism that was a result of schism within Christianity, and the division of Christianity into various opposed confessions: *CATHOLIC*, *ORTHODOX*, and *PROTESTANT*. Although the reasons of the Christian schism are, neither exclusively, the nor mostly, of spiritual, sacral nature; Christian universalism — in the European context this means religious universalism — was challenged in its religious, and not secular, state or national dimensions.

With the appearance of Islam, a new religion with universalistic aims as well, especially with its penetration into Europe, religious particularism became even stronger.

⁵ *New Testament*, Gal 3, 26—28.

⁶ See: Aurelius Augustinus, *De civitate Dei*, XIX, 17.

The universalistic and totalitarian character of European Christianity resulted in the creation of a unique *Weltanschauung* in which there was no place for particular ways of thinking that would be limited by state or national particularity. What resulted out of the schism within Christianity and especially out of the conflict between Christianity and Islam, was the emergence of mutually excluded and hostile, therefore, particular *Westanschauungs*, which became one of the fundamental pre-conditions for the later forming of nation and national consciousness. This could be said especially of those regions in which opposed Confessions, like, for example, in the territory of contemporary Yugoslavia, collided.

In the context of the conflict of competitive religions, even the biblical motto in Christ's sentence: »Love your enemies, pray for those who pursue you!« and which stands as a fundamental of Christian universalism, was challenged.

In old Greek this sentence is: Ἀγάπατε τοὺς ἐχθρούς ὑμῶν and in Latin: *Diligite inimicos vestros*. Both, the old Greek and Latin have two words for *enemy*.

1. ἐχθρός, that is, *inimicus* (etymologically engl. *enemy*) the word used in the quoted sentence by Jesus, means temporary enemies, members of the same civilizational and cultural (or religious) circle, like, for example, according to Plato, Hellenes in war among themselves, whose enmity he called *DISCORD*,⁷

2. πολέμιος, that is *hostis* (etymologically engl. *hostile*) means »natural enemies« that are in a constant and *IRRECONCILEABLE ANTAGONISM*, as that, according to Plato, between Hellenes and barbarians.⁸

The fact that Jesus demands love not for πολέμιος, but only for ἐχθρός, proves, in the opinion of German theoretician Karl Schmitt, the limited universalism of Christianity, which he supported by the fact that Christians were never demanded to direct their Christian love to Islamic enemies, either during the Crusades, or in many centuries of resistance to Turkish conquest of Europe.⁹

The Relationship Between Religion and Nation in Yugoslavia

The above mentioned religious universalism was, due to historical events, mostly challenged on the territory of Yugoslavia that is halved by the border-line between European East and West. After the first great schism within Christianity, the western nations of Yugoslavia (the Croats and Slovenians) accepted the Roman-catholic confession, while the eastern nations (Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians) as bearers of Byzantine culture, practiced the Orthodox confession.

⁷ Plato, *The Republic*, 470 cd.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Karl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, Hamburg, 1933. S. 4f.

The Turkish penetration into Europe was stopped somewhere on that half of the national territory of Croatia which, for this very reason, received the name of *antemurale christianitatis*. Both, this penetration and centuries of occupation of eastern Yugoslav territories, left behind numerous inhabitants of the Islamic confession (mostly in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Members of three different Confessions lived mixed together — which is a result of the flight of Orthodox inhabitants from the Turkish invasion — in a relatively small territory and spoke the same Croatian or Serbian language. In such a situation, the main criterion for national differentiation was religion, that is Confession, together with the accompanying cultural tradition.

However, it is true that Croats (Catholics) and Serbs (Orthodox) have had a state-law tradition from the very mono-national kingdoms in the Middle Ages, from which, various basic nations would have developed even if there were no confessional differences among them.

The influence of Confession on national self-determination has been strongest in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where members of the Islamic religion live together with Catholics and Orthodox, mostly in the same proportions. Since both Catholics and Orthodox have, exclusively according to confessional criteria, declared themselves as Croats and Serbs, members of the Islamic Confession that had previously declared themselves as Croats or Serbs, or nationally undeclared, have, since the second half of the twentieth century, officially constituted a separate nation that has the same name as their religion: the *MOSLEM NATION*. Members of this nation call themselves, in a religious sense, moslems, and on the level of nationality *Moslems*. The fundamental and only constitutive element and *differentia specifica* of these Moslems when compared to neighbouring members of two other nations is Islam.

With this example we have tried to illustrate what a great significance religion, that is Confession, had in constituting various nations in Yugoslavia. However, it is not our intention to claim that religious, Confessional influence in the formation of nations in Yugoslavia (and generally) is exclusive and the only one, and that the relationship between nation and religion is one-directional, monocausative. We want to point out that this relation is one of mutual influences, a dialectical relation in a wider, polydeterminative socio-cultural structure and social totality.

This complexity of mutual influences was, in a way, pointed out by Max Weber in the context of the debate on the relation and influence of Protestant ethics on the phenomenon of capitalism and the capitalistic spirit. Therefore, every concrete historical religion, regardless of its meta-physical, transcendent, and mystic dimensions, has certain specific characteristics that result from its socio-demographic, historical and social situation. This, of course, does not mean that religion, even in its

concrete historical forms could be reduced to the above mentioned social and cultural — therefore also national — dimensions and be definitely explained by them. Undoubtedly, however, religion is, besides being a meta-physical, physic, and moral fact, also a social and cultural phenomenon. Any historical religion and religiosity is socially mediated and articulated. It could, be said that religiosity, religious consciousness and ideas, as well, are born in a certain social context and framework, and therefore, are influential — among others, the national one, particularly in the Orthodox Confession — and change according to social changes.

In this context, a terminological remark should be added, especially because it is of a methodological significance; that is a distinction between religiosity« and »religious consciousness« needs to be made.

Religious consciousness, in the sense of selfrealised religiosity has two essential meanings:

first, it refers to the rational, discursive dimension of the religious form of the human mind in which the out-of-rational (or i-rational, or supra-rational) is not included. In religion, it is namely that dimension of meaning which in the relation between Confessions is coloured by strong constitutive religious emotions;

second, religious consciousness signifies a theoretical approach to the phenomenon of religion in its constitutive element, which is transcendent being; namely, that which originally means theoria, contemplation, — reason's consideration of the essential.

This does not exclude intuition, but is basically of reason and, as such, necessarily has its own inner limits in the antinomy of the human theoretical mind. On the other hand, the essential religious dimension belongs to the practical sphere of the experience of the human mind and being (the experiencing of the Cosmos either as created and directed by the supra-natural reason of an absolute demiurge and legislator, or as immanent and self-created, by processes governed by natural law.)

That means that theology as the theory of religion (or religious consciousness) is too ambitious when it tries to explain religion rationally to the very end and justify it. So is atheistic ideology (negative theology) when it tries to deny it.

Consequently, we feel that the notion of »religious experience« pertains more to the total religious relation to the world. Or, if one prefers, the notion of »religiosity« could be used to refer to the rational, conscious, and i-rational (subconscious, supra-rational) dimensions of the human mind.

The Sociology of religion, using rational, scientific, (theoretical and empirical) methods, deals with the relationship between religion and society, referring to the concrete social and historical (therefore national as well) conditions and consequences of certain religions and religiosity. In other words, it investigates religiosity as social behaviour, while science cannot deal with the transcendent, meta-physical and i-rational dimensions of religion.

Max Weber (in the fifth Chapter of *Economy and Society*) points out the great importance of national, social and economic conditions, emphasising the significance of the position of social strata for their religiosity, but does not reduce religiosity to those conditions.

Religiosity is, accordingly, manifested as:

1. The attachment of farmers to nature and causal religiosity and not to rational systematisation;
2. the suitability of a rational ethics to a warrior-aristocracy for whom the categories of sin, salvation etc. are strange;
3. the nonhomogeneity of religiosity for citizens because of their social heterogeneousness.¹⁰

We should, however, be reminded that besides social determinations of consciousness, there are also onto-gnoseo-logical determinations as well as religious ones regardless of their possible divine origins (like the need for entirety, meaning, transcendence of sheer empirical reality). For this reason, religiosity has its self-essentiality and in some of its aspects (namely meta-physical ones) is quite tough and resistant to historical and social changes.

The question of the future of religion is related to this. From what has been said, it could be predicted that as a consequence of positive social changes (if any) and the de-institutionalization and de-ideologization of society, traditional religion and religiosity would become more and more personal, therefore, socially, nationally, and politically epiphenomenal. It could, in addition, also be assumed that religiosity could transform itself into a complexity of poetic symbols of a meta-physical, totally incomprehensible world, life, and especially death (something like art, for example). It could, therefore, transform socially and spiritually, but never disappear.

¹⁰ Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1922.), Studienausgabe, hrsg. von J. Winckelmann, Kiepenheuer — Witsch, Köln — Berlin, V. § 7; also see: §§ 11, 12.

Mislav Kukoč, Nikola Skledar: O ODNOSU RELIGIJE I NACIJE

Sažetak

Religija i nacija su značajni fenomen što, u stanovitom smislu, određuju čovjekovu socijalno-historijsku esenciju i egzistenciju. Međutim, o odnosu religije i nacije samo je marginalno raspravljano, kako u socijalnofilozofijskim, antropolozijskim i sociologijskim teorijama nacije, tako i u filozofiji i sociologiji religije i religiologiji.

Dok antropolozi i sociolozi, s jedne strane, među konstitutivne čimbenike nastanka nacije: zajednički teritorij, jezik, kulturu, podrijetlo, državu, svijest, karakter itd. gotovo nikada ne ubrajaju religiju; religiolozi i teolozi, s druge strane, vazda naglašavaju, ako već o njima govore, dijametralnu suprotnost *religije*, kao univerzalnog, transcendentalnog i eshatalogijskog entiteta, i *nacije* kao svjetovnog i historijskog partikulariteta.

Autori ovoga teksta, međutim, ukazuju na povezanost ovih fenomena u njihovu historijskom postanku i razvoju, što je poglavito došlo do izražaja prilikom konstituiranja jugoslavenskih nacija.