



Ferid MUHIĆ

**BOŠNJACI I BOSNA:**  
*studija iz filozofije politike (1)*

**BOSNIAKS AND BOSNIA:**  
*A Study in the Philosophy of Politics (1)*





ILUSTRACIJA – Rekonstrukcija izvedena na temelju izvora: Nepoznatí autor, *Detalj – Scena iz kahve*; ilustracija iz osmanskog albuma, Istanbul c. 1620. (Biblioteka Chester Beatty).

ILLUSTRATION – Reconstruction done on the basis of source: Unknown author, *Detail – Coffee house scene*; folio from an Ottoman album, Istanbul c. 1620 (Chester Beatty Library).

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## Abstract

In this article, the author suggestively points to the importance of understanding the concept of nation and the state in the context of the European philosophical thought and practice regarding the nation and the state. Although the occasion is about the Bosniak/Bosnian nation and the Bosnian state, the author's reflections are applicable to all groups similar to the Bosniak/Bosnian nation, as well as to all the states similar to the Bosnian state. The basic premise of this article is that the idea of a universal nationality, culture and civilisation does not oppose or negate the particular feeling or the subjective experience of either the nationality or the state. The membership of European Union does not detract the right for any nation in Europe of the right to cultivate and develop its national culture as well as its particular state consciousness. In fact, in the extent of which every nation and every state in Europe has an active awareness of its national and cultural specific value, gives Europe, indeed – the European Union strong and important role in the global community. Hence, the Bosniaks/Bosnians, both as a nation and a state (nation) have no need to withdraw, but rather have the historical opportunity to feature their specific Bosnian culture and Bosnian state as a richness worthy of appreciation, not only in Europe, but also in the world.

**Key words:** *Bosnia, Bosniaks, Bosnianity, nation state, individual, nation, society, state, philosophy of politics, civil state.*

## Introduction

The contributions that follow are conceived as a whole consisting of four or five parts. They are the continuation of my text „A Word to Bosniaks“, published in early January 2012, as well as of dozens of texts, public lectures, forums, and TV appearances focused on open issues of Bosniaks' national identity and the status of Bosnia. Just as throughout this period, and just as in all my public addresses, written or spoken, these texts will be guided solely by the principle of truth, as the only subject of all my investigations, without bothering about whether people will like it or not. Thus, I will endeavor to formulate my basic views as premises, clearly articulated, and firmly founded, both logically and factually. Indeed, developing the reasons, deriving conclusions from these premises, and presenting the advocated views are, in line with my capabilities, fully harmonized with the endeavor to uncompromisingly pursue the truth on this occasion as well, as the central principle and core motive of a scientific paper and any public engagement.

## Bosniaks and Bosnia

**b**osniaks and Bosnia. An individual, a people, a nation, a state. Over the past few years, there have been increasingly frequent public discussions on the anachronism, obsolescence of „nation“ and „national affiliation“ as concepts and, particularly interestingly and by no means unintentionally where Bosniaks are concerned, even on „reactionism“ when the issue of their nation state is raised. As if no critic of „Bosniak nationalism“ can see that there are nation states all over the world, wherever the indigenous nation lives, as a standard form of their political organization. Within the European Union (EU), all countries with no exceptions are still of the national character. Still, the idea that Bosnia and Herzegovina should be organized as a civil state where Bosniaks, the indigenous nation with the absolute majority (the 2013 census) should renounce their ethnic and spiritual heritage in favor of the civil state specifically refers to the allegedly civil character of the EU. Why do I say: „allegedly“? Because if it indeed were the case, the EU would be organized as a union of states where all the nations that constitute member-states of the EU would exclude, from their state organization, the factor of ethnic, language and spiritual distinctiveness in favor of an abstract civil nation – „Europeans“ – as their joint affiliation.

Instead, we are witnesses to the fact that all of the EU member countries are still organized as nation states. We also witness that in these nation states, where other indigenous nations live as well, in the EU itself, the processes of the creation of a nation state have not died out; on the contrary, they smolder incessantly and flare up with renewed force every few years. Catalonia strives to gain independence from Spain, and the same tendency perpetuates the Basque tensions toward the Spanish central government; Scotland and Ireland continuously seek the status of a state and autonomy from the UK; the Walloons and the Flemish maintain incessant tension endeavoring to gain independence and thus divide Belgium into two nation states; even the Corsicans are intensively organizing themselves in their struggle for the independence of Corsica from France; the Czechs and the Slovaks, who used to live under foreign rule for centuries and in a common state – Czechoslovakia – for decades, separated and became organized into two nation states at the first opportunity; finally, Yugoslavia, as a union of South Slavic nations, underwent several changes in political systems, from a monarchy to the Socialist Federal Republic (SFRY), to become fragmented, according to national criteria, into five distinct nation states: Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Montenegro. It included the separation of Montenegro from Serbia, an event that no one could believe would happen: the jewel of „Serbianity“ fell out of the Serbian crown, the proverbial „two eyes of a single head“ separated from the „head“; and this was followed by the secession of the autonomous province of Kosovo from Serbia, motivated by the rights of Albanians as the majority indigenous population, to create their nation state.

The only exception, to this day, is Bosnia and Herzegovina. Why? Only because agreement has not been reached about its single, i.e. structural and dominant, national identity from the perspective of members of the Serbian and Croatian national minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who became instruments in the context of the great-state claims of Serbia and Croatia to divide Bosnia between them and include these parts in their own nation states. In these attempts, the only realistic and, as it turned out, unsurmountable obstacle to their ambitions was the irrefutable fact that the majority population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, by their national (ethnic, spiritual, cultural) affiliation are neither Serbian nor Croatian, but they constitute an indigenous, autonomous and separate nation (ethnicity) with a thousands years-long cultural and centuries-long state-building tradition – Bosniaks. Attempts to physically exterminate and displace Bosniaks during the 1992-1995 aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and to forcibly repopulate its regions that were devastated due to the aggression and genocide did not produce the expected results and consequently, the issue of the political status of this state is still open, 28 years after the aggression and 25 years after the armed defeat of the aggression.

Still, endeavors to make Bosnia and Herzegovina (all or part of it) a nation state of Serbs or Croats have not vanished. On the contrary, they can still be found in the narrowest focus of these two countries' strategic interests, raised to the level of their vital national interests. Does this finally herald the need for the struggle for truth and, particularly, for the struggle for national self-confirmation of Bosniaks as a nation? The question is reasonable, in the context of both the incessant pressures focused on disallowing the national recognition of Bosniaks by Serbia and Croatia, and the pressures by representatives of the international community, whose strategic interests in the region currently converge with the interests of those two countries. It seems that the core of the Bosniak national body is also yielding under this pressure and is increasingly loudly and frequently publicly expressing capitulating claims for Bosniaks to abandon their ethnic and spiritual recognition and, deprived of the crucial features of their identity, be persuaded to vanish from the global scene as an independent nation (ethnium) and become lost and melt into '*Bosnianity*' as an anonymous, a-national demographic factor, in order to make Bosnia and Herzegovina a „modern civil state, after the model of the EU and its member countries“ (?). However, they have completely forgotten the facts listed above, i.e. that the EU is a „modern civil Union“ by all criteria, and all its member countries are also „modern civil states“, although neither the EU nor any of its member countries has renounced their prominently national character nor rejected their ethnic or spiritual labels, and that it never occurs to them to sacrifice their national character in favor of the anonymous and a-national „Europeanity“.

Let us sum up: Bosniaks and Bosnia are in a difficult situation, threatened both from the outside and from the inside, by others and by their own. So far, they have resisted all the threats, the military power, economic sanctions, political blackmail and pressures. When the enemies of Bosniaks and Bosnia realized that none of these methods had managed to break Bosniaks down and extinguish their national and cultural awareness or annul Bosnia as a state, they searched for a weak spot – or more accurately, the strongest spot where the unbreakable strength of Bosniaks and Bosnia originates. They searched and found it.



What was the hair for Biblical Samson, what was hidden in giants and dragons as a bear, then as a wolf, a fox, a falcon and finally a pigeon, so that one had to kill first the bear, then the wolf, the fox, the falcon and finally the pigeon to deprive the dragon of its strength – this is for Bosniaks their national name, their ethnic affiliation, their spiritual and cultural distinctiveness, their awareness of their centuries-long state-building tradition, united in the notion of Bosnia as a symbol and a synonym of their Mother Country. Deprive Bosniaks of all these and Bosnia will vanish from their memory. When they have forgotten that they are Bosniaks and that Bosnia is their primordial homeland and native soil, it will kill the bear, the wolf, the fox and the falcon, and the pigeon where their strength is hidden will wither and fall by itself. Only two constituent nations will remain in the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Serbs and Croats. The majority of its population who used to be called Bosniaks will be degraded to the amorphous demographic category: '*Bosnians*', who will, instead of their lost national affiliation, find comfort in the newly acquired abstract status of the citizens of a „modern civil state“. Eventually, this country would change its name and split into two parts with names of their own, particularly keeping in mind that for over two decades half of Bosnia has already been called the *Republika Srpska*, and one fourth the *County of Herceg-Bosna*, which would finally erase every trace of Bosniaks and every memory of Bosnia.

What can and must Bosniaks do to survive as what they are and who they have always been on their ancestors' native soil of Bosnia? It is simple and clear: They must preserve their name, Bosniaks, nourish their ethnic character and spiritual tradition. They must realize that their survival is now an issue of preserving spirit and culture, rather than an issue of political organization. In this stage, and particularly in the future, the survival of Bosnia is an imperative of the self-awareness of Bosniaks as a nation, of preserving their knowledge about themselves by nourishing their spiritual and cultural tradition, rather than an issue of the physical survival of Bosniaks and defense of their state territory.

In order to achieve this imperative, Bosniaks can quite realistically and without any difficulties begin the organized and systematic resistance to cultural assimilation and intellectual dominance that is imposed on them intensely, systematically and by every means. In parallel, they should work on suppressing their own unfortunately omnipresent and widely spread submissiveness and colonial mindset of inferiority. Instead of the passive adoption of any authority of others in matters concerning themselves and their national interests, it is necessary for Bosniaks to develop an independent critical distance from them – whoever the authorities are and wherever they come from. This particularly pertains to Bosniak academic circles in the area of historical, social and political studies, who have completely, almost seminally, ignored any independent reasoning (*critique*, since the root of the term '*critique*' is the verb *kritein* = *to reason*). Fascinated by sonorous names and their media popularity, Bosniak academicians came to believe that by unconditional acceptance of those views and by mere imitation of their technical jargon, they themselves could take over part of that popularity and the reflection of their authority. Instead, Bosniak academicians became mere epigones, promoters of someone else's ideas, unaware that even these ideas were interpreted quite differently and accepted with reservations in the countries of their origin.









*i Bosna sa heraldičkim obilježjima državnosti i periodičnim kartografskim prikazima.*  
*ks and Bosnia with heraldic features of statehood and periodic cartographic representations.*



Specifically, with respect to the relationship between the philosophy of politics and the political reality, one should keep in mind the historically irrefutable fact that all new ideas and concepts of the individual, the nation and the state, regardless of how spectacular they have been over the past three centuries, were not accepted with the expected enthusiasm nor did they change the practice of political organization of European nations into nation states, whenever and wherever it was possible. A particularly convincing example pertains to the spread of the idea of cosmopolitanism, articulated in the period of Enlightenment, and systematically elaborated in the rationalist philosophy through the theory of the universal equality of „human nature“. Eruptively politically promoted in the slogan of the 1789 French Revolution: *Freedom, Brotherhood, Equality* („Liberté, Fraternité, Egalité!“), which literally fascinated the entire epoch, this cosmopolitan password did not materialize and, actually, it only inspired the separatist tendencies of nations who had previously lost their country. The original idea, that we are all equal because we are one people (*Gens una sumus!*) has not resulted in the melting down of nations into the anonymous equality of „Humanity“; rather, it was interpreted as the idea that all nations have the same rights and that some nations have been refused these rights. Throughout this period, and to this day, all these ideological interventions, with all their enchanting power, have never challenged the nationalist political practice of any country that readily responded to this cry. Despite their appeal and popularization in social studies and literature, they have not even changed citizens' views, nor have they eliminated ethnic, religious, cultural or even racial prejudices and stereotypes. Thus, it is evident that the philosophic definition of a „united universal humanity“, highlighted as cosmopolitan, was manifested quite differently in practice. Moreover, all theoretical debates on „post-national societies“ end within academic narratives, without any real effect either on political practice or on the ethnic, national and cultural awareness of citizens and of the majority, if not all, of the authors of these theoretical interventions. Everywhere in the world, today just as throughout other millennia, mankind lives fragmented into numerous intra-homogenous human groups and communities, historically formed into numerous nations, each of which has developed its own language, tradition, customs and, particularly, marked the territory in which it has lived since time immemorial. Regardless of how compromised it was later, through some extremely nationalistic manifest forms, this essentially romantic idea provides a far more realistic image of humanity. Instead of through abstract unity, we see that humanity everywhere materializes its biological distinctiveness (as *Homo sapiens*) through division into a myriad mutually different ethnic groups and nations. An understanding of the universality and omnipresence of this fact removes from the agenda any further questioning of the alleged anachronism of the idea of the nation state and non-justification of the feeling of attachment to one's own ethnic, language or national identity. This fact fully legitimizes every man's right to refer to their affiliation:

*Yes, I am who I am!*

Starting from the assumption of everyone's inherent freedom, with all due respect to the right of every person to define himself as an individual in the broadest context – just by the delineation of his affiliation to mankind – one must also respect every person's right to define himself both as an individual and as a member

of a distinctive national (ethnic, cultural, language) community and, ultimately, as a citizen of his own country. Therefore, when you say, for yourself or before others, without any hesitation or embarrassment:

*Yes, I am a Bosniak!*

you have taken a decisive step toward your own self-respect and have given the greatest contribution to the national recognition of Bosniaks and the survival of Bosnia. Although the theoretical investigations of the relationship between the individual, society and state developed unevenly in different periods and different regions, peoples, societies and countries, they have undergone essentially the same stages and have faced very similar basic challenges as their historical background. Therefore, a brief analysis of the development of these understandings will be equally relevant for understanding the current dynamics and internal logic of the relationship between the individual, the society and the state in the contemporary reality of Bosnia, just as anywhere in the contemporary world.



ILLUSTRATION - Rafael Sanzio, *Academy of Athens (La Academia de Athens)*, detail; depicts Plato and Aristotle (center), Ibn Rushd (known in the West as Averroes), bottom left and other ancient philosophers sharing their knowledge.



## The individual, society, state – philosophical aspects

**t**he issue of the relationship between the individual, the nation (community, ethnos) and the state, in the strict philosophical context, boils down to the theoretical issue of the relationship between a whole and its parts, while in the theory of the philosophy of politics and in practice it is manifested as the issue of their hierarchy, priority and subordination. When asking the question: „Do individuals create a nation, and a nation – a state?“, philosophy asks a neutral-value question, the same as if we asked: „Is the ‘forest’ made up of a certain number of individual trees, as its parts, or is every individual tree only a part of the ‘forest’?“ Naturally, this very question sounds unjustified, since it is more than clear that there is no ‘forest’ without trees, while a single tree, even alone and without the ‘forest’ is still a tree. The tree is a prerequisite for the existence of the forest. On the other hand, the forest is not a prerequisite for the existence of the tree. The same applies for the relationship between the individual and the nation: There is no nation without individuals, while the individual remains an individual even without the nation. In other words: the nation achieves its reality through individuals, while the individual has his reality within himself. This example can also be applied, though with a somewhat changed meaning, to the relationship between the nation and the country. There is no country without a nation; there are many nations without a country. The country assumes its reality only through nations: the nation has its identity in itself. The fact that many countries consist of two or more nations, or that a single nation may have more than one country, does not change anything in the value-neutral principle, which says that *the nation is a necessary, though not a sufficient prerequisite for the existence of a country, while the country is neither a sufficient nor a necessary prerequisite for the existence of a nation.*

However, as soon as philosophy moved from the analysis of the parts and the whole of an object to the analysis of the relationship between the individual, the nation and the state (from trees and the forest to people), it left the area of value neutrality and stepped on a slippery terrain of hierarchy, supremacy and subordination, priority and marginality, cause and effect, and ultimately – means and the goal. At this crucial turn, the whole history of political philosophy (thus, the philosophy of community, since the root of the word ‘politics’ actually signifies ‘community’), split into two main streams, according to how each of them answered this fundamental question. Prioritizing the individual led to the recognition of a person, personal freedoms and rights, while the community, particularly the state, was understood as a form of social organization whose highest goal was achieving the ideal of a free, sovereign individual. Only free individuals can form a free state. Of course, this axiom saw any attempt of the state to restrict personal freedoms and individuals’ rights as an attack on the generic, ancestral essence of man. Uncompromising struggle against such a state ended only in its destruction.

*Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains!* – this sentence by Jean-Jacques Rousseau most pregnantly expressed the ideals of the tradition of the philosophy that viewed the community, the society and the state as a means, and the ideal of a free, sovereign individual as the ultimate goal of history. Under his influence, this view was radicalized to the extreme by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, for whom: *Whoever lays*

*his hand on me to govern me is a usurper or tyrant, and I declare him my enemy.* Max Stirner fully shared Proudhon's feeling of irrepressible individual freedom as the greatest value, also claiming that *Every state, as an institution, is intrinsically the enemy of the people.*

The other stream found its source in the opposite view, reduced to the axiom: *The individual is nothing, the nation is something, the state is everything.* According to this viewpoint, man as an individual is almost no man without the state. Essentially, this understanding is based on the assumption that, by his nature, man is a „being of community“ and that, consequently, one cannot even speak of any man beyond community. This claim springs from ancient philosophical heritage. It is certainly the most quoted of Aristotle's definitions, according to which man is defined by the phrase *zoon politikon*. This definition is still one of the least understood definitions, since at the level of semantics, *zoon politikon* does not mean a „political animal“, as it is typically arbitrarily translated (certainly not from Aristotle's text but rather, one might say, passed down for several generations), but rather, quite simply and literally: a „social being“. In line with the rules of defining, which were formulated by Aristotle himself, *the definition proceeds by citing a genus to which the term belongs, and then the difference that gives its species (Definitio fit per genus proximus et differentiam specificam)*, in this case the category „Man“ is defined by the closest genus „living being“ (*zoon*), and by the distinction that Aristotle defines by means of the fact that this „living being“, by the laws of his nature, lives in the community. Quite clearly and simply, Aristotle says that man is a „social being“ – a being of the community (*politikon*), since the word politics signifies the community (therefore the word *politeia* – *state, community*), rather than „politics as an activity“ in the sense in which it is used today. Aristotle's next sentence effectively and unambiguously supplements this rule, with the assessment that *he who can live alone is a beast or god*. One should keep in mind that Aristotle lived in a society with polytheistic religion, and that here he expresses his belief that gods are immortal, that they live independently in a community or alone, and that besides gods, wild beasts, although mortal, live alone by their nature.

Determining inherent, inborn sociality as the distinctive essence of men as a genus implied that the priority was transferred from the individual to the community. Aristotle himself wavered in different periods, alternately placing priority on the individual and on society. However, since the very beginning, the „waters“ of these two irreconcilable streams began to mix. Thus, for example, Plato first analyzes the phenomenon of the human community and determines its character, deriving from this analysis conclusions about the essence of its relationship to the individual, and about the basic obligations that the individual has toward the state resulting from this relationship. One can see that the two streams already began to branch in Plato's dialogue „Symposium“ (*Symposion*), where Thrasyarchus opposes Socrates when the latter defines the state as a „community based on justice“ aimed at applying justice for all its members, claiming that every state is essentially an instrument of force and that, consequently, what we call 'justice' is actually only the force that the state uses against individuals in achieving its interests. Far later, particularly in the philosophy of German classical idealism, the relationship between the individual, society and state would be defined based on deductive metaphysics, which gained its final expression in Hegel's view: *The truth is the whole!* According to this view, the whole of material reality, as well as individual views in reasoning, are



defined and evaluated from their position in a whole, which means that the individual is fully subordinated to the whole, or specifically – to the state. Promotion of the state and complete neglect of the individual, all the way to his total disparagement, became the foundation of this philosophy. Hegel's apotheosis of the state to the status of absolute authority promoted civil loyalty and unconditional submissiveness to the state to the highest value and obligation, while denying any independence to the individual. Hegel systematically advocated this totalitarian model of the state and the supremacy of the state over the individual both in his philosophical treatises and in several proverbially brief and piercing aphorisms, which were accepted with delight by the authorities and adopted by the vast majority of citizens as an irrefutable truth and sacred obligation: *Without the state, the individual is – nothing, It is the state that allows the emergence of the individual. The most that the individual can do is die for the state, and the most the state can do is accept this sacrifice.*

Difficulties in the consistent one-sided advocacy of either of the two extremes in discussions on the relationship of 'individual, society, state' are evident as early as in the interpretations of Aristotle himself. Some interpreters believe that Aristotle irrefutably places priority on the community as a general principle, since both the individual and the community, including the state as a form of the community, are derived from human nature as a general condition, common to all. Others believe that, on the contrary, Aristotle's view indubitably promotes the priority of the individual. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Aristotle did not share Plato's views on accepting differences in each individual's affinities and preferences, which then result in their different interests. According to Aristotle, this must be kept in mind when considering the relationship between the individual and the state. Plato ignored these differences and grouped the preferences of all people into only three categories: 1. desire for material goods; 2. ambition; 3. desire for truth. Still, one might object that Plato himself derived this categorization from his understanding of everyone's nature as an individual, rather than from the principle of „human nature“ and justice, i.e. a „greater good“, which he believed to be the motive and justification for the existence of the state. Indeed, Plato suggested that every man has three basic needs: 1. material; 2. moral; and 3. intellectual, which, in man, are physiologically represented by: 1. stomach; 2. heart; and 3. head. According to Plato, the only, though vital, difference results from the fact that neither these parts of the body nor these needs are equally distributed in all people: in some, the stomach dominates; in others, the heart; and in still others, the head. A just state should be founded on the existence of these differences and, in line with them, organized based on respect for their hierarchical position. It is on this categorization that Plato conceived his ideal state, which is composed of three categories of citizens: 1. workers; 2. soldiers; and 3. philosophers.

The above, fairly detailed presentation of Plato's philosophy of politics convincingly illustrates the complexity and controversy of the issue of the relationship: individual, nation (citizens), state, even when it involves the most significant representatives of the philosophy of politics. It is in this light that one should understand that, contrary to those who believe that Aristotle placed priority on the individual rather than on the state, there are also some interpretations according to which Aristotle, in fact, placed priority on the whole over the part, and thus on the community (state) over the individual, essentially referring to the same argument, that for Aristotle

'human nature' is the common basis which ultimately determines the essence of each individual. This allows the conclusion that, in Aristotle's philosophy of politics, the individual as a category is derived from the general category of 'mankind', which then justifies the conclusion that Aristotle still places priority on the state over the citizen, on mankind over the individual man.

That neither interpretation has offered sufficiently convincing arguments can be seen from the fact that it was referred to both by the advocates of the conception of the priority of the state over the individual and by their opponents, who defended the premise of the priority of the individual over the community and the state. In the early Hellenic period, the famous philosopher Epicurus highlighted the autonomy and integrity of the individual as values that must not be sacrificed in the name of any state or personal interests, because the individual has the highest degree of the specificity of existence, as opposed to the state, which is an abstract category to a high degree. His arguments were so convincing that, as a response, that period witnessed the phenomenon of mass unwillingness to accept the jobs of public servants and highly-ranked positions, with the parallel intensification of social values in human life, particularly the values of friendship and love. A similar view that favors the recognition of the autonomy of the individual and the reduction of social obligations, even the individual's total withdrawal from public life, is also recommended by members of the Stoic school. Stoicism's insistence on the values of man as an individual, particularly prominent in its emphasis on the moral integrity of any man, regardless of its consistence and impressiveness again reveals the logical and conceptual difficulties of the one-sided answer to the question of the relationship between the individual, the nation and the state, regardless of what the answer is. Indeed, the promotion of the individual's right, his obligation even, to pursue his own moral principles, even at the expense of withdrawing from social life, contradicts the fact that Stoics derive the individual from the general notion of humanity, i.e. that they believe the individual to be primarily a member of mankind and only then an individual. It is on this view that Stoics base their well-known theory of cosmopolitanism and the essential equality of all people. They missed the implication that the individual's moral integrity is incompatible with the theory of the priority of humanity over the individual, not because they overlooked it but rather because no philosophically relevant contemplation of the best way of life can renounce the request for the moral integrity of man as an individual – which was the basic inspiration and the central topic of the Stoic philosophy. The same difficulty in consistently defending either of the premises was faced by Plato's followers (i.e. those of Socrates, since Socrates was Plato's teacher) who, in their quest for the best model of the individual's life and its optimum relationship to the state, split into two opposing streams, although they both had common inspiration in Plato's philosophy. On the one hand, the Cyrenaic school headed by Aristippus promoted an active, intense social and political life focused on the actual personal satisfaction and success of every individual. On the other, the *Cynic school* advocated the individual's withdrawal from any social position and obligation, while declaring personal integrity and freedom at the expense of such abstinence to be the highest value, finding the meaning of life in moral independence rather than in the acquisition of material goods. Famous representatives of this school include Diogenes, who is well-known for, among other things, living in an old clay jar and carrying a lamp during the day, claiming to be looking for an honest *man*.



The Middle Ages witnessed the domination of the concept of the priority of the whole over the parts, which was particularly influenced by Neoplatonic philosophy. According to this conception, the individual man is derived from the notion of the whole and returns into the whole. Still, the individual as a category did not lose its meaning, since it was postulated within religiously oriented philosophy, which means that its disappearance would result in the loss of the fundamental meaning of religion – the salvation of the individual. Still, the individual's status was of secondary character, and the acceptance of the fact that every community, even the state, is actually an aggregate of individuals, and that the individual undoubtedly precedes the community and the state, can be seen in no writing of this period. It was only upon the emergence of nominalism, which pointed to the difficulties in attributing an ontologically realistic status to general notions (*There exists a specific object, but not a notion; there exists this apple, but not the apple in general*), that the status of the individual was more strongly recognized, although the priority of the state (Church as a community, Divine State) remained inviolable. The debate then oscillated between the two extremes, definitely attaching a greater significance to the Whole (society, state), with the acceptance of a different but always present degree of irrefutable autonomy of the individual. The impossibility of completely excluding the individual as an independent entity from theoretical discussions, and subsume it under the notion of community, i.e. state, was practically demonstrated by Giordano Bruno with his tragic example. Although in his philosophy of nature he developed the theory of the whole of the universe, which implied the almost total marginalization of individual as such (thus of man as an individual), he himself, with his own example, confirmed the irrefutability of the ontological and any other status of the individual, by opposing the Whole (society, church, state) and remaining consistent to himself as an individual even at the moment of his execution by being burnt at the stake.

This example has a huge symbolic significance for understanding the real proportions of the role, values and power of the individual, i.e. his importance for the existence and character of every society, particularly the state, as a political, legal and moral community. In this context, it becomes clear that the individual, both as a specific person and as a category, is indeed a necessary assumption and prerequisite for the existence of any community, from family to state, and that by his real significance he transcends the frameworks of any theoretical and scientific discussion, proving to be the crucial participant in human society and history.

After the end of the domination of religious reasoning, which was marked by the philosophy of rationalism, the issue of the relationship between the individual, nation and state opened new horizons, though it essentially remained controversial. Thus Descartes (French philosopher, founder of the philosophy of rationalism, René Descartes, *Cartesius*, 1596-1650), postulated the absolute recognition of self-awareness, formulated in his famous axiom: *I think, therefore I am!* (*Cogito, ergo, sum*) and thus absolutized the individual's intellectual autonomy on the one hand though, on the other, he derived this from the most general notion of the divine mind, natural light (*lumen naturale*). In this way, he unambiguously conditioned the intellectual autonomy of the individual, expressed in the absolute status of self-awareness, by placing absolute priority on the supra-individual unity of matter and thought (*res extensa, res cogitans*), ultimately – God.

The same internal controversy was present in the contemplation of the relationship between the individual, society and state by Spinoza, another famous representative of rationalism (Baruch Spinoza, Dutch philosopher, 1632-1677). In his well-known work *Ethics*, Spinoza promotes the individual's ethical awareness and moral integrity to the extreme, independently of all social pressures and consequences to which such an uncompromising position can lead him in life (due to his adamancy in defending his views, Spinoza himself was a victim of an unsuccessful assassination, as well as of official excommunication). Still, his metaphysical, ontological position adopts the obviously opposite principle of the promotion of the absolute Whole, where notions of God and Nature are equated and where they overlap (*Deus sive Natura – God or Nature; Whole is One – whether we call it God or Nature*), which means that the individual's moral autonomy is ultimately secondary, derived from the notion of Whole, which thus assumes absolute priority over the individual. In all likelihood, Spinoza himself was aware of this logical discrepancy, since he raised the autonomy of the sovereign individual's moral will to the highest pedestal, defining it as the *intellectual love of God (Amor Dei intellectualis)*. Although it explains the supernatural source of the individual's moral integrity, this makes his status even less independent since the individual, even in his right to uncompromisingly pursue his convictions, as opposed to the society and state, still has to obey the call of divine intellectual love, which definitely places priority on the Whole.

The issue of the relationship: individual, society, state received more specific content in the works by the third great representative of the philosophy of rationalism, Leibniz (German philosopher, mathematician and inventor, Wilhelm Gottfried Leibniz, 1646-1716). Still expressed in philosophical language and through philosophic categories, his conception of this relationship is defined by two mutually opposed positions. On the one hand, Leibniz took the recognition of the individual to an extreme which is, even theoretically, impossible to cross. Indeed, his system, explained in his work *Monadologie*, begins with the claim that the world is composed of monads (Greek, *monos – one*) and he consistently defines the monad itself as „what has no parts“. This definition removed the immanent problem contained in the notion of an atom which, although it means „indivisible“ (a-tomos), is actually divisible since every atom has a distinctive form and size, both in the view of the philosophers who first used this notion (Leucippus and Democritus) and in atomic physics, which measures the size of the atom and determines its elements (protons, neutrons, electrons), which clearly means that the very notion of „atom“ was wrong at the start. With his definition of monad, Leibniz solved this problem brilliantly, and indeed anticipated the results of the most recent research in quantum, sub-molecular physics. However, in parallel with this, indeed with the ultimate promotion of the very notion of monad (and therefore a person as an individual, since *individual* literally corresponds to the notion of Leibniz's monad, because it also means in-divisible, from the root of the Latin word *divide (divide)* and the negative prefix *in*, thus *in-divide, what cannot be divided*) – Leibniz also promoted the priority of the Universe as the whole of all monads, which are hierarchically positioned, from the lowest (*monads nues*) to the highest (*actus purus*). This top monad is by definition the pure distilled active principle, and as an activity without any material traces, it



is simply – God himself. Leibniz also introduced, in such a conception of the Universe, the dynamic principle of *striving, yearning, urge (appetition)*, which urges every lower monad to strive for a higher level, and directs all of them together through striving for the perfection of the supreme monad – God.

When applied to the social context, Leibniz's system offers an interesting and instructive image of human history. The basis of every society, and thus of the state as well, and of human society as a whole, is the individual, as irrefutable and necessary as the monad. Every individual is an element which composes the society and state, just as in the material world everything that is composed, that has parts, is made up of monads, which are themselves not composed and have no parts. Such an austere, objective and realistic definition of the individual certainly includes him among the most thorough and most austere analysts of the structure of any society and state, where the individual is a necessary element of their existence. When applied to people, a monad's striving to progress from the lower to higher positions provides a very inspiring parable since it is expressed as man's inherent striving for perfection, as an anthropological constant and universal feature of man as a being. At the same time, this *striving for perfection* also explains the ultimate goal of the activity of every man and every society, indeed of the whole of mankind, as impressively articulated in Leibniz's definition: *Man (Mankind) is the asymptote of God* – in line with the definition that an asymptote is a *straight line that in its function infinitely approaches an infinitely distant spot*. In the light of this conception, man as an individual and all forms of his social organization as a whole assume the integrating principle of activity, which in turn allows the observation and understanding of what is common in all, apparently chaotic, records of the historical experience of different nations and states. If every society is composed of individuals, and every individual strives for perfection, then the necessary conclusion is that all societies and the whole of mankind are essentially the same community which infinitely strives for infinite perfection. In other words, for Leibniz history is the process of mankind's approach to God or, more specifically: *infinite approach to the infinite God*.

With this glorious philosophical system, Leibniz, at least in theory, eliminated any justification for the issue of contradictions of the individual and society derived from the assumption of their opposed interests, class struggles, inter and intra-ethnic conflicts. His conception of society also elevated man as an individual, and human society as a whole, to the level of the most noble urges and their primordial direction toward eternity and perfection. For him, man is a being of community, whereby the genuine equality of the basic constitution of every man, expressed as the striving for perfection, is the foundation of every society and every state. In his life, as in his philosophy, Leibniz shied away from debate, dispute and conflict. His system endeavors to harmonize all contradictions, both those in different philosophical systems and the inherent logical contradictions of his system. Such an approach results in his monadistic system which, at the ontological level, excludes the very possibility of the existence of irreconcilable, antagonistic opposites, even the more permanent forms of diverging activities that would challenge the essentially integrated whole of the world. In the same way, at the anthropological level, the individual, society and state are organically and inextricably

internally connected, both functionally, in the sense that they could not exist independently of each other, i.e. without each other, and axiologically, since the striving of the individual (as a monad which constitutes the reinforcement of every society and state) for perfection and eternity can be achieved only within the society and state. Besides, the striving of every society and every state for an ever-improved and perfect model of organization and nobler social goals could not find its inner strength without the axiological energy provided by each of its members – individuals.

(To be continued)



ILLUSTRATION – Scribes of the Kingdom of Bosnia - charters, grants, deeds of Bosnian bans and kings of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.