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Diploma Thesis

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Great American Myths: Nation-Building and Identity Politics in the United States of America

Velké americké mýty: Budování národa a politika identity ve Spojených státech amerických

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I would like to thank my supervisor for her kind and valuable guidance.

I would also like to thank my amazing mother for always being there for me.

Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně, že jsem řádně citoval všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

Abstract:

This thesis attempts to analyze the American Thesis, also the American Creed or the American Ideology (the terms as used by Anatol Lieven in *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*) as the United States` national identity. In interaction with a set of national myths, the American Thesis constitutes the narrative of US America`s identity, the nation`s 'common sense' and morality. The thesis begins with the definition of the phenomenon of the nation as a political and cultural community, then proceeds to discuss the specific contexts from which the narrative image of the US nation emerged. Next, the thesis studies the American Creed as the cultural instrument of fostering social cohesion and assimilating uncanonical dissent. Finally, the myths of US nationalism are analyzed in the context of their narrative structure and affective dynamics which account for the ontological and emotive power of the American Thesis.

Key words: the USA, US nationalism, the American Creed, myth, nation-building, national identity

Abstrakt:

Diplomová práce se zaměřuje na analýzu tzv. Americké teze, také Americké krédo nebo Americká ideologie (termín, který používá Anatol Lieven v *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*) jako národní identity Spojených států. V interakci se souborem národních mýtů Americká Teze představuje příběh (narativ) o americké identitě, vyjadřuje 'zdravý rozum' a morálku národa. Práce začíná definicí fenoménu národa jako politického a kulturního společenství, poté pokračuje diskusí o konkrétních kontextech, z kterých vzešel narativní obraz amerického národa. Dále práce analyzuje Americké krédo jako kulturní nástroj podpory sociální soudržnosti a asimilace nekanonického nesouhlasu. Nakonec diplomová práce probírá mýty amerického nacionalismu v souvislosti s jejich narativní strukturou a afektivní dynamikou, které tvoří ontologickou a emotivní sílu Americké teze.

Klíčová slova: Spojené státy americké, Americký nacionalismus, mýtus, Americké Krédo, budování národa, národní identita

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1.Introduction

… there is no way to give us an understanding of any society […] except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources.

- Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*

America […] is a place, […] where fact and fiction, myth and reality dance a curious gavotte. It is a society born out of its own imaginings.

- Christopher Bigsby, "Introduction: What, then, is the American?"

This thesis attempts to discuss the discursive construction of US America`s national identity. Drawing on the works by Liah Greenfeld, Richard Hughes, Anatol Lieven, and Pierre Bourdieu, I argue that the American Thesis (or the American Creed / the American Ideology) represents the United States` national identity, the nation`s 'common sense' and morality ('the good') which bind US America ideologically, managing dissent and thereby fostering social cohesion (pro-social behavior) and commitment to the nation state among the American people.

To support my argument, I will, following the argument by Benedict Anderson, approach the US nation as 'a political imagined community.' Following the understanding of the nation as a community of *individuals*, I will therefore stress the primacy of the analysis of the human factor in the construction of social reality. This will allow me to define the nation as foremost a mental construct (indeed, Anderson`s 'imagined community'). In my understanding, nations are imagined for identifiable political reasons and in specific 'styles' / manners of imagining. Therefore, I will study the nation as foremost a political and cultural community.

Drawing on John Breuilly`s conception of nationalism as 'a form of politics' as well as the definition of nationalism as the discourse of the elites, I will thus study the political dimension of nation-building from the perspective of the centrality of the issue of power and the active existence of power groups in possession of capital (economic, political, symbolic, etc.) which these groups seek to preserve and augment (to support this argument, I will address the analysis of the colonial elites in North America by Howard Zinn).

Following Liah Greenfeld`s conception of human society as essentially symbolic and meaning-oriented, I will proceed to discuss the cultural dimension of the phenomenon of the nation. I will therefore argue that a specific image of social reality is sustained by subjective,

meaning-creating symbolic means of culture and materialized / objectivized into empirical reality from the minds of the participants in a social order. Adopting Pierre Bourdieu`s notion of habitus, I will argue that culture is constitutive of mind, and that, to discuss such social phenomena as the nation, it is important that we not only identify the relevant actors in possession of power in whose interests the adoption of national identity is attempted, but also study the meaningful orientations of these actors, that is, the concepts and ideas that constitute their worldview and define their motivations (that ideological repertoire which the actors perceive as commonsensical and morally right to profess).

This understanding of the nation as a political and cultural community corresponds to Greenfeld`s division of the process of nation-building into its two most fundamental phases – the structural and cultural phase. It is within this framework that I will attempt to study the specific contexts from which the US nation emerged. The structural constraints of US America`s national beginnings were expressed by the structural (and thus status) inconsistencies between the traditional image of social order and the new social reality of the day (the Revolutionary moment in the former American colonies). This inconsistency, which was structurally manifested as 'anomie,' caused an identity crisis in the elite groups and was potentially disruptive of the status-quo of power relations which was previously guaranteed by the traditional organization of social reality as well as by the traditional identity within this status-quo configuration of power. This provided an incentive for the elite groups to unite the former colonists into one nation and thus ensure the preservation and augmentation of the various sorts of social capital. A national identity was thus in demand.

The cultural constraints of the emergence of the US nation were manifested in the fact that future Americans were already in possession of national identity which was the English national identity with its peculiar complex of ideas and values, most fundamental of which was the ideal of individual sovereignty / liberty (the equality of rational human beings; the individual`s right to exercise power over their lives, be their own master). As I will argue, English nationalism constituted the habitus (the common sense and the 'good') of future Americans, and, when the colonists perceived that England departed from these canonical values and ideals, they declared independence. The peculiar rhetoric, which allowed the architects to articulate and legitimize their dissent, became the first expression of the nascent nation`s identity.

Drawing on Anatol Lieven`s terminology, I therefore argue that the US nation`s identity as a set of ideas and a symbolic construct is represented by the American Thesis (the American

Creed or the American Ideology) which postulates faith in civic liberty, individualism (the acknowledgment of the autonomy of the individual conscience), as well as in cultural and political egalitarianism. Following Lieven`s line of argument, I will thus demonstrate how the American Thesis as US America`s national identity not only articulates, rationalizes and legitimizes the discursive construction of the US nation, but also binds the United States` national community in a powerful ideological consensus, assimilating various kinds of dissent and holding the patchwork of the US nation together.

Finally, drawing on the analysis by Richard Hughes, I will study the American Creed in the context of its interaction with the most fundamental myths of US nationalism / culture which, in my argument, account for the astonishing power of the Thesis to manage departures from the canonical image of social reality and provide the Creed with its ontological status that it has in the minds of most Americans. I will argue that it is the specific narrative organization of such mythic constructions that makes the myths of US national culture so believable, enduring, and organic to the US American national mind. Following Hughes`s discussion of US mythology, I will thus attempt to demonstrate how the narratives of *chosenness*, *naturalness* (self-evidence) and *messianism*/*millennialism* in an intricate interaction with the principles of the Thesis create the narrative of the US national identity, simultaneously making this construction plausible, self-evident and affectively binding.

2. The Definition of the Nation

Nations provoke fantasy.

- Lauren Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy*

According to Berlant, there is a complex interaction of forces that make up a nation. Nations link the private and personal to the collective and political in a nexus of meanings and explanations, producing the phenomenon of national consciousness. In my understanding, the study of the nation in 'dry' scientific terms does not provide one with the full picture of the phenomenon and does not explicate its force. The nation is not merely about the historical process, not merely about structures; nations are in many respects about *narratives, images*, and *rituals*; they are emotions and feelings, *identifications* and renunciations, and therefore, as Berlant puts it, a "field of force."[1]

The nation is thus in a lot of respects about *people*, for it is the human being and the human mind that ultimately fantasize a nation. Adopting a constructivist perspective, I argue that social reality does not exist independent of human consciousness. Therefore, while studying communities and social phenomena such as the nation, I believe it is important to take account of foremost the human factor. As Liah Greenfeld writes in her *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, it is *the human factor* (the human agency) that constitutes the nucleus of social action, combining in itself both culture (idealism) and structure (social structuralism).[2] As Greenfeld notes, "[b]oth ideas and social structures are only operationalized in men."[3] It is the individual who first imagines and ultimately objectivizes both culture and structure in various transactions with other participants in a social order.[4] Greenfeld notes that in case a particular image of social order "loses its grip on the minds of a sufficient majority, or of a minority with sufficient power to impose it on others, it cannot be sustained and is [thus] bound to vanish from the outside world as well."[5] As this citation demonstrates, social reality is materialized / objectivized into the lived reality through the agency of human actors, for, as Greenfeld asserts, quoting Durkheim, "men […] 'are the only active elements of society.'"[6]

[1] Lauren Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 57.
[2] Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1993) 19-20.
[3] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 19.
[4] Greenfeld, *Nationalism,* 18.
[5] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[6] Greenfeld, *Nationalism,* 19.

This approach to the phenomenon of the nation somewhat allows us to reformulate Berlant`s remark that 'nations provoke fantasy' into a more probing question: *Can the nation itself be one such fantasy?* The thesis therefore invites the reader to attempt to answer this question by approaching the nation as foremost a *mental construct* and social reality as the product of human consciousness and its activities. Jerome Bruner, one of the fathers of the cognitive revolution in psychology, suggests that we view social reality from the standpoint of the philosophy of social constructivism, as he notes: "contrary to common sense there is no unique 'real world' that preexists and is independent of human mental activity and human symbolic language; that what we call the world is a product of some mind whose symbolic procedures construct the world."[7] 'Reality' is thus "what one stipulates (rather than finds),"[8] and "what we take as the world is itself no more nor less than a stipulation couched in a symbol system."[9] The world perceived as given is therefore the product of human thought, human imaginings. Reality is not given, but the result of world *making*. There is no aboriginal reality, while to believe otherwise, as Bruner believes, is to fall prey to naïve realism.[10] Since there is no 'aboriginal reality,' what *makes* 'reality' along with its 'ultimate truths' and 'falsities' ('common sense') is the *meanings and imaginings* of social actors.

The work of Benedict Anderson has been among the most influential contributions to the consolidation of the constructivist approach in the study of nations. Anderson approaches the nation as, indeed, a mental construct, or, as he defines it, 'an imagined community.' An imagined community, as Anderson argues, is basically any community that functions beyond 'face-to-face' interaction among its members.[11] The nation as a community of individuals falls under this category as well, and is therefore also imagined. This is not to say that the nation necessarily implies something existing *only* in one`s imagination (not real), rather that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[12] The existence of nations is thus due to the act of *imagining communion*.[13] At the same time, all nations are imagined as *limited* ("even the largest of them […] has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations"), *sovereign*, and as a *community*

[7] Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1986) 95.
[8] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 104.
[9] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 105.
[10] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 65.
[11] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Vergo, 2006) 6.
[12] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.
[13] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

("regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship"[14]).

In her study of nationalism, Greenfeld similarly draws the reader`s attention to the amount of imagination involved in constructing a nation, as she writes: "[t]he only foundation of nationalism as such, the only condition, that is, without which no nationalism is possible, is an idea."[15] Nationalism is thus "a style of thought."[16] The particular image of a national community "exists as much in the minds of people as in the outside world:"[17] social actors objectivize this image from their minds into the lived reality in various interactions with one another as well as with social institutions which, themselves shaped by the image, as if testify to the 'reality' of it.[18] As Pierre Bourdieu believes, "an exploration of objective structures is at one and the same time an exploration of the cognitive structures that agents bring to bear in their practical knowledge of the social worlds thus structured."[19] Following the above argumentation, I therefore argue that the nation is a mental construct in the sense of its being an imagined community as well as in the sense that social reality itself and the knowledge of it are somewhat the products of the human mind and human agency.

To return to Anderson`s understanding of the nation, the scholar, exploring the boundaries of imagined communities, argues that such communities are "to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."[20] I understand this 'style of imagining' not least in the sense that any national community seems to be sustained by the symbolic means of a respective culture which tends to display a liking for some versions of that particular community and not for others. Anderson at the same time describes the nation as a "political community,"[21] and thus adds further dimension to the present discussion of the nation: the political dimension which I understand as foremost the dimension of *power*. Therefore, the nation is as imagined as it is related to the field of politics and power, which allows me to identify two most important aspects to the phenomenon of the nation: the nation as a *political* and *cultural* community. This understanding is further supported by Greenfeld`s analysis of the process of nation building in which she distinguishes two fundamental phases

[14] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.
[15] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 3.
[16] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 4.
[17] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[18] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[19] Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, trans. Lauretta C. Clough (Cambridge, Oxford: Polity Press, 1996) 1.
[20] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.
[21] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

in the formation of nationalisms: *structural* and *cultural*, "each defined by the factor dominant in it."[22] These two phases therefore determine the very *nature* of the phenomenon.

2.1 The Nation as a Political Community

Such scholars of nationalism as, for example, John Breuilly, approach the phenomenon of the nation as foremost "a form of politics."[23] Nationalism, in Breuilly`s understanding, is about "seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments."[24] Nationalism is thus related to the issue of power (to the pursuit of power by certain social groups), and most importantly to the power to control the state. The key point here that marks the difference between *a nation* and *a people* is the presence of a *political and intellectual elite*, having the resources and motivated to control and channel the political activism of the masses for its own purposes (to gain control of the state) and for the security of its interests. Therefore, I might conclude that the issue of *power* is thus closely related to the discussion of elite groups.

As Greenfeld notes, "nationalism was a potent force already before it became a mass phenomenon, simply because it motivated the elites who held the reins of power and controlled collective resources."[25] Therefore, I argue that, in the political process, the elites play a leading role. In my assessment, the elite is a power group that ensures the very existence of a political regime: "persons who, by virtue of their strategic locations in large or otherwise pivotal organizations and movements, are able to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially."[26] It is a group that operates in the "field of power" that Bourdieu also calls "the field of the dominant class."[27] Although refusing to regard nationalism as *exclusively* the politics of the elites, Breuilly nonetheless agrees that the elites are essential as actors in the construction of national identities as well as in organizing and spearheading national revolts.[28] Therefore, in my understanding, the elites set the rules of 'the national game,' and, in many ways, they do so in accordance with their own particular motivations. The elite groups would

[22] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 16.
[23] John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) 1.
[24] Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2.
[25] Greenfeld, 23.
[26] John Higley, *Elite Theory in Political Sociology* (Montreal: IPSA International Conference, 2008) 3.
[27] Pierre Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field: General Sociology*, Volume 2, edition est. Patrick Champagne, Julien Duval, Franck Poupeau and Marie-Christine Riviere, trans. Peter Collier (Cambridge, Medford: Polity Press, 2020) 293.
[28] Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State,* 2.

logically be the principal beneficiaries in case the nationalist project proves successful. How so?

What makes the elites a powerful group is their possession of a particular resource, or, in Bourdieu`s terminology, *capital:* economic, political, and not least cultural or symbolic.[29] Capital, in fact, becomes "a central stake in the struggle for the monopoly on dominant positions."[30] This is however not about "the mere possession" of certain capital per se, but "the possession of a *capital conferring power over capital*, meaning over the very structure of a field, and therefore, among other fields, over profit rates, and by extension, over all ordinary holders of capital."[31] The elite is thus "the dominant class [that] comprises all agents that in effect hold the positions of power over capital, meaning over the very functioning of"[32] the field of power. This understating of the elites` motivations makes me conclude that this class must be the most conservative segment of society. Its conservatism resides in the fact that these groups seek to extend the status quo of power relations ("to secure power over the different powers"[33]), for it is the existing regime that makes them the upper class of a given society. It follows, then, that the elite groups are most interested in the maintenance and the continuous reproduction of those social, political, economic, and power relations in which they prosper, unless the existing regime puts these relations at risk of disruption. In this case, the elite seeks "to transform these [existing] power relations."[34] This paradoxically creates the situation when this most conservative segment ends up in the vanguard of social change. Following Howard Zinn`s understanding of the American Revolution as in many respects a conflict between the elites,[35] I therefore dare argue that the Revolutionary moment in the British colonies in North America was in fact due to a schism among the power groups (between the colonial elites in America and the established elites in the British metropole).

As I will further argue, the existence of the nation is premised on the idea of a national people`s sovereignty, most importantly *political* sovereignty. In my understanding, by its 'illegal' actions ("a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these [sovereign] States"[36]), the British metropole

[29] Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*, 5.
[30] Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*, 5.
[31] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Power and the Division of the Labour of Domination," in *Researching Elites and Power*, ed. Francois Denord, Mikael Palme, Bertrand Reau (Paris: Springer, 2020) 34.
[32] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Power and the Division of the Labour of Domination," 34.
[33] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Power and the Division of the Labour of Domination," 34.
[34] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Power and the Division of the Labour of Domination," 34.
[35] Howard Zinn, *A People`s History of the United States* (London and New York: Longman, 1980) 83.
[36] "Declaration of Independence: A Transcription," *National Archives*, accessed 14 Feb 2020, https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript.

abridged the sovereignty of its people in North America. The colonial elites at the same time understood very well that the non-recognition of a people`s sovereignty was synonymous with the danger of the revision of all statuses, rights, and relations *within* the American colonies. While change is logically a space of uncertainty, the preservation of the existing regime in this case created a depressing *certainty*, that is, the loss of sovereignty, which was, again, synonymous with the loss of power over the very field of power, of the various kinds of capital. This, as I see it, was the very reason why the colonial elites in America decided to create a nation and part ways with the imperial center; indeed, why they entered the struggle to "establish in whose name it is legitimate to dominate."[37] I will attempt to prove this point below in the discussion of the historical contexts from which the US American nation emerged.

At this point, I would like to address Greenfeld`s analysis of the *structural* phase (involving a structural change in a social reality) in the formation of nations, for it adds an interesting dimension to the discussion. The colonies` declaration of independence, although protecting the elites` interests from the English center, changed the social reality (its very structure) in yesterday`s British possessions in North America. According to Greenfeld, the transformation of social reality into a nationalistic one could not have occurred, had influential actors not been "willing, or forced to undergo it."[38] This transformation however created a "fundamental inconsistency:" the elites` former identities (provided by the old organization of the social structure) were no longer commensurate with the new social reality of the day; and this accounted for *the crisis of identity* of these groups. The elites simply lost their status, guaranteed by the colonies` membership in the English nation: there were no longer any structures which would legitimize the status-quo power relations. The elites suffered "the identity crisis" which was structurally manifested as "anomie" and "took the form of status-inconsistency."[39] This "inadequacy of the traditional definition, or identity, of the involved group" served as "an incentive to search for and, given the availability, adopt a new identity."[40] It follows, then, that, to preserve status and power by first mobilizing the masses against the oppressive forces and later by nationalizing the former, the elite groups had to secure an ideological consensus among the former colonists. The elites sought the masses` cooperation, but lacked any easily available knowledge of how to accomplish it, which

[37] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field*, 293.
[38] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 14.
[39] Grenfeld, *Nationalism*, 15.
[40] Greenfeld, *Nationalism,* 16.

resulted "in the need for models and blueprints, for an image of order."[41] They therefore needed to devise *a nation*, and thus fill an identity void. As Greenfeld puts it, "[t]he adoption of national identity must have been, in one way or another, in the interest of the groups which imported it; [s]pecifically, it must have been preceded by the dissatisfaction of these groups with the identity they had previously."[42] Rather restrained in viewing nationalism as exclusively the politics of the elites, Breuilly nonetheless contends that the loss of expected positions suffered by the members of the political and intellectual elites may contribute to their liking for nationalist ideology as an ideology able to supply a new identity carrying "images of an ideal state and an ideal society"[43] in which they will maintain their positions of dominance. The fact that the new identity was *national* indicates the existence of the national idea in the architects` minds as well as the acknowledgment of national identity`s "ability to solve the crisis."[44] The adoption of one common national identity thus became the most optimal solution to the crisis in that particular historical moment. In that context, the creation of a nation out of a relatively atomized mob of individuals was the best possible resolution to the structural crisis, that is, it could effectively protect the status and particular interests of the elite and secure the elite`s power over the state. This, in my opinion, links the issue of identity brought up by Greenfeld to the issue of power studied by Breuilly and Bourdieu. The desired organization of power relations is ensured by a particular structure of social reality (social order) which in turn provides the interested actors with a stable identity. Should a structural change occur, there would no longer be any structure to support the validity of the actors` identity and their claims to power and status.

The schism was thereby creating a new social reality which was to be truly national. As Bourdieu notes, "when the dominant class changes, the principle of its domination […] its legitimating discourse changes"[45] as well. However, what kind of a nation was it to be? In the first years of its existence, the US American nation was *not a given*: it was poorly defined and comprised a motely mob of individuals with just as motely sets of conflicting/dissenting interests and loyalties. As Greenfel notes, "what was born was not the infant American nation, but the embryo."[46] With the English out of the way, the imperial center no longer threatened the elites` exercise of power. What now threatened the elites` interests was the lack of unity in the nascent American nation. Given my understanding of the elites as the most conservative

[41] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[42] Greenfeld, *Nationalism,* 14.
[43] Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 329.
[44] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 14.
[45] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 299.
[46] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 422.

segment of society, I dare logically conclude that the elites thus fear any kind of turbulence, anything that can compromise their power and status. However, I also believe that such social turbulence is practically a constant in the social reality of US America, for its very identity is built on the idea of individual sovereignty (which I discuss below) which is positively reinforced by the cultural ideal of secession. The example of the US nation-building project demonstrates that, for the architects of the US American nation, perhaps the greatest obstacle to the securement of their interests was the lack of all kinds of unity in the former colonies (for example, the existence of multiple 'local' identities that of 'a New Englander,' or 'a Virginian,' but not necessarily *American*[47]). In "Federalist 10," James Madison recognizes the danger that factionalism – a "common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community"[48] – pose. He also believes, however, that factions (the inequality of people in 'possessions, opinions, and passions') are 'endemic' and inevitable. Therefore, he stresses the importance to *control* this factionalism. In her analysis, Greenfeld supports this argument by writing about "the persistent threat of secession" to "the development of national unity."[49] As Greenfeld remarks, "[t]he separatist impulse was inherent in the very conception of the Union,"[50] and is indeed built into the fabric of US American national consciousness. This cultural ideal, or even the organizing principle, produced much of the 'entropic' force that was constantly endangering the desired 'unity in diversity.'

My argument is that, if at first an ideological consensus was needed to convince the masses of the necessity to overthrow the unjust British rule, after the independence had been won, an ideological consensus in the form of one common national identity was necessary to create a stable social space (social reality) in which the elites could exercise their power, augment capital, and thus remain in control over 'the field of power.' The US American nation had to be *imagined* in such a way as to make it the central object of a collectively binding allegiance. According to Wodak, et al., national identity as a discourse is foremost the discourse of *the elites*.[51] Discursive acts and practices are "socially constitutive"[52] (the issue of power inheres in this constitutiveness), for they create particular social conditions, construct, legitimize, and

[47] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 409.
[48] James Madison, "The Federalist Number X," *The Federalist*, ed. John C. Hamilton (Pheladelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1864) 105.
[49] Greeneld, *Nationalism,* 431.
[50] Greenfeld, *Nationalism,* 431.
[51] Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl and Karin Liebhart, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, trans. Angelika Hirsch, Richard Mitten and J. W. Unger (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) 3.
[52] Wodak, *The Discursive Construction*, 7.

then maintain and reproduce a particular status quo, or even destroy a status quo as in the revolutionary moment in the American colonies.[53] Discursive acts and practices "influence the formation of groups and serve to establish or conceal relations of power and dominance between interactants."[54] The models of identity are thus articulated by the elites and acquired by national interactants in various dialogic contexts.

According to Greenfeld, "[t]he particular image of social order," which "forms the constitutive element of any given society," is "provided by a culture."[55] This argument places "an emphasis on the cultural, subjective, meaning- and model-creating symbolic elements in social reality" and invites to take account of "the concepts and ideas in the minds of people," both the active national actors and ordinary national members, which are "necessary for the interpretation of any social phenomenon" such as, in this case, the nation. Indeed, the elite groups may be motivated by specific situational constraints to shape, organize, and lead nationalist revolts and construct nation identities, yet the question remains: what kind of reasoning may guide their actions? Therefore, Greenfeld deems it important to take into consideration the interested actors` reasoning (their ideas, volitions, motivations), and how such "principles of vision"[56] make it possible for these actors to manage their specific situational constraints.[57] This brings us to the discussion of the second aspect of the phenomenon of the nation, that is, the conception of the national community as (at its core) a *cultural* community.

2.2 The Nation as a Cultural Community

As Greenfeld remarks, "[s]ocial reality is intrinsically cultural" and "necessarily a symbolic reality, created by the subjective meanings and perceptions of social actors."[58] Any given social order represents an objectivization of its image from the minds of those who participate in this order.[59] This specific image of social reality is provided by a community`s respective culture. Culture thus provides "models and blueprints"[60] of social order which structure social

[53] Wodak, *The Discursive Construction*, 7.
[54] Wodak, *The Discursive Construction*, 8.
[55] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[56] Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*, 1.
[57] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[58] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[59] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 16.
[60] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 16.

reality and allow an effective cooperation among a community`s members The national community is therefore an 'intrinsically cultural' community.

In her research, Greenfeld, in fact, identifies a cultural phase as one of the fundamental phases in the formation of nationalisms, as it follows the structural phase in which a structural change in a social reality occurs.[61] The dominant principle operant in the cultural phase is the conceptualization of the national idea in accordance with the relevant actors` particular "indigenous traditions"[62] of thought and belief. If the structural phase generates specific situational constraints, the cultural phase creates its own *cultural* constraints. As Greenfeld notes, "[c]ultural and structural constraints always interact,"[63] while this interaction wields considerable influence on the interested agents, producing specific states of minds in these individuals in power.[64] These states of mind undergo rationalization (conceptualization) by the actors and, "if rationalized creatively, may result in new interpretations of reality, [and thus] affect structural conditions."[65] As Greenfeld remarks, "[s]ocial action is determined chiefly by the motivations of the relevant actors," while these very motivations are in turn shaped by the actors` "beliefs and values" as well as by the structural constraints which the actors find themselves in. Given the interaction between the structural and cultural constraints, structural constraints thus also "affect the [actors`] beliefs and values."[66] Social action is therefore determined by motivations and in turn creates structures.[67] The conceptualization of the national idea in the context of specific structural and cultural constraints thus creates specific / unique national identities. Following Greenfeld`s argument, "any identity is a set of ideas, a symbolic construct,"[68] and I dare argue that it is even more so in the case of the US American national identity, for "[t]he American case illustrates the essential independence of nationality from geo-political and ethnic factors and underscores its conceptual, or ideological, nature."[69]

Before proceeding further, I believe that the conception of the nation as a cultural community requires a working definition of what *culture* truly is. I therefore suggest that culture be viewed "as a system of rules and principles for 'proper' behaviour, analogous to the grammar

[61] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 16.
[62] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 17.
[63] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 20.
[64] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 20.
[65] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 20.
[66] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 20.
[67] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 20.
[68] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 20.
[69] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 23.

of a language, which sets the standards for 'proper' speaking."[70] As Pierre Bourdieu, French sociologist and anthropologist, puts it: "there is always a correspondence between the objective structures within which any given social individual lives and the mental structures that they draw on to conceptualise the social world."[71] Culture is thus what guides thought and behavior not only in the sense of its establishing patterns of these thought and behavior, but also in the sense of its setting a complex "of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call 'programs') for [their] governing."[72] I thus argue that the study of culture, of "the cultural, subjective, meaning- and model-creating symbolic elements in social reality,"[73] is necessary in the analysis of communities, including the national community. A national culture therefore might be described as representing a particular discourse: it constructs "meanings which influence […] and organize […] both our actions and our conception of ourselves […]; [n]ational cultures construct identities by producing meanings about 'the nation' with which we can identify; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and imagines which are constructed of it."[74] A national identity created in/by culture is "a discursive sketch:" that is, it does not pretend to the hegemonic uniformity over the national subject and allows *factionalism* or differences in various sorts of background (class, ethnic, sex, etc.). However, national unity is achieved "by the exertion of cultural power" in the "offering both membership of the political nation-state and identification with the national culture."[75] It is worth noting, however, that such national unity "exists only as a discursive construct."[76] "In the modern world," as Hall states, the national culture into which one is born "is one of the principal sources of cultural identity."[77]

In this section, I will attempt to demonstrate how a national community does not exist independent of culture, how it is itself a product of culture and history (structural and cultural constraints). Culture presents a particular image of shared reality: it determines the common sense (the canonical) of a given national community. Culture is created and transmitted in/through *the word* in various transactions (interactions) among the members of a national community. The unique character of a nation (its identity, its 'color') is determined by its

[70] Wodak, *The Discursive Construction*, 20-21.
[71] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 28.
[72] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973), 44.
[73] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 19.
[74] Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Hall, Stuart, Held, David, Hubert, Don and Thompson, Kenneth (Cambridge, Mass. and Oxford, 1995) 613.
[75] Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 616.
[76] Wodak, *The Discursive Construction*, 24.
[77] Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," 611.

culture, "the predominant narratives, inscribed goals and moralities intrinsic to that culture."[78] To become a national member is to learn the word and how it should be used, that is, to learn the culture and the proper expression of one`s intentions in a culturally appropriate manner.[79] Language and the canons of its use are the necessary cultural instruments that allow one to operate/participate in cultural transactions (in a culture). *Language* thus not only "implies a view […] about [one`s] symbolic environment," but also prescribes "how one is presumed to operate within it."[80] Following Bruner`s argument, I argue that the world as one knows it (and one`s national community as part of this world) does not arise from direct experience of it (even those undergo 'interpretation' through conceptual filters – ideas, attitudes, cognitions, perceptions, etc.).[81] The 'known' (national) reality is therefore *conceptual*. The 'realities' of the social world arise in linguistic use (given the constructiveness of language) in interpersonal negotiations of meaning. Bruner suggests to view culture as a *forum* (highlights the forum aspect of culture) for such (re-)negotiation.[82] Each culture is in possession of its own means for negotiating meaning. Meaning is consensus: "meaning and reality are created and not discovered."[83] Any national community seems to be sustained by the symbolic means of a respective culture which tends to display a liking for some versions of that particular community and not for others: "'reality' is what one stipulates (rather than finds)"[84] and "what we take as the world is itself no more nor less than a stipulation couched in a symbol system."[85]

National Identity as Habitus

As I have already mentioned, following Greenfeld`s argument, the 'birth' of nations is due to the interaction of specific structural and cultural constraints which define the unique character of specific nationalisms and national identities. To illustrate the role of cultural constraints in the formation of nations a bit more, I would like to adopt the concept of habitus from the social philosophy of Pierre Bourdieu. In my opinion, the concept of habitus aptly demonstrates how culture shapes social reality, how it is indeed about cultural *constraints* rather than active volition on the part of the actors in their conceptualization of the nation.

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[78] Michele L. Crossley, *Introducing Narrative Psychology: Self, Trauma, and the Construction of Meaning* (Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000) 42.
[79] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 65.
[80] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 142.
[81] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 122.
[82] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 123.
[83] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 149.
[84] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 104.
[85] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 105.

Habitus (from French, *habitude*: 'habit') in Bourdieu`s understanding can be roughly described as a regular (as in 'a recurring pattern') social behavior; "customs [and] costumes,"[86] so to say. The social agents "are inscribed inside the social world; they inhabit the social world,"[87] while this world is "a place of acts of knowledge." A social subject is "oriented by meanings"[88] of the social world; they must *know* it in order to be able to participate in it. In this regard, habitus represents some kind of "practical knowledge and mastery of the patterns of the social world."[89] Therefore, the category of habitus is a system of norms which is formative and constitutive of an individual`s behavior and their interactions/transactions in a social space; it is a set of "dispositions that are permanent life styles resulting from learning, training and incorporation." Habitus represents "the rules that govern the working of a social space, the rules of the game."[90] Given that "the social exists both in things and in bodies,"[91] habitus as "the incorporated social"[92] similarly exists in the body of a community as well as in the bodies of its individual members. Habitus, according to Bourdieu, "turns […] social things […] into living realities."[93]

"The notion of the habitus," according to Bourdieu, "defines a principle that generates thoughts, perceptions, actions and words."[94] Three levels of habitus can thus be distinguished: the mental level of ideas (cognition); the level of "emotions and attitudes" in which certain emotions come to be associated with certain ideas (affectivity); and the level of "behavioural dispositions,"[95] the willingness to direct one`s behavior in accordance with the ideas and emotions/attitudes associated with them (actionality). Jerome Bruner, for his part, refers to it as "schematizing" (Bourdieu also uses the term "schemas"[96]): schematizing in the realm of the social is "a persistent framework of institutions and customs which acts as a schematic basis for constructive memory."[97] These schemata make the 'skeleton' of one`s experience. Bruner attributes 'schematizing' to the economy of mental processes (perception, attention, extraction of knowledge, etc.). Interactions (and the products of them) are therefore *habitualized* into 'formats'/'models,' which allows the interacting partners to "predict each

[86] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 25.
[87] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 81.
[88] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 49.
[89] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 67.
[90] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 26.
[91] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 26.
[92] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 29.
[93] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 25.
[94] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 65.
[95] Wodak, *The Discursive Construction*, 29.
[96] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 82.
[97] Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1990) 58.

other, attribute intentions, and in general assign interpretations to each other`s acts and utterances."[98] This is most evident in children`s behavior: when the habits of interaction are violated, they react with surprise.[99] With age and experience, these self-made 'models' evolve ("specialize and generalize"[100]), and so do the theories about the world and others, about human condition, which inhere in these models. In fact, these models are rarely 'self-made.' These models are something we appropriate/internalize from what constitutes the commonsense knowledge within our cultural community: "experience on and memory of the social world are powerfully structured […] by deeply internalized and narrativized conceptions"[101] provided by habitus.

The entrance into a habitus takes place in the process of one`s becoming a social agent; as one "enters into the relationship with the social."[102] The incorporation into the social allows the agent to develop the 'automatisms' of orientation in a social space and the 'automatisms' of adequate reaction to events and situational contexts.[103] This leads one to make sense of and adequately react to social reality, to communicate one`s thoughts and even *feel* in a particular way.[104] Through the internalization of habitus, one is predisposed to see and act in a specific manner; the agent feels this mode of perception and the style of action as *organic* to himself or herself.[105] Specific perceptions and assessments of social reality result from economic, but, more importantly, *social* and *axiological* relations: they establish structures and social practices which guide the agent`s actionality in a social space. As Bourdieu puts it, "social subjects are modified by social and economic conditions" and "constantly transformed by experience - this is what the habitus is."[106] Habitus is thus a product of *history*, a set of schemata of perception, thought, and action, which adjudicates on the normality / *canonicality* (perhaps, even naturalness) of social practices. The acquisition of a habitus is thus "a process whereby the biological individual […] enters into a relationship with the social world, of which he is always partly a product."[107]

[98] Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds,* 49.
[99] Bruner, *Actual Minds,* 49.
[100] Bruner, *Actual Minds,* 49.
[101] Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 57.
[102] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 68.
[103] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 80-81.
[104] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field*, 27-30.
[105] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field*, 136.
[106] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 122.
[107] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 122.

The internalization of habitus through social learning is the "kind of education without agents consciously teaching or taught;"[108] it is "sense without consciousness."[109] Social agents "do not have a perspectival view of the world or see it as representation; they engage with reality and act and operate within it with no deliberate object of consciousness or reflection."[110] Bourdieu`s central idea here, by his own admission, is that "there may be knowledge and meaning without consciousness."[111] Social agents are therefore not so much social subjects or actors, for they are not fully in control of social meanings nor are they consciously playing a certain role. According to Bourdieu, the term 'habitus' denotes that social agents "are a locus of intentions of meaning, of meaningful intentions of which they are not strictly speaking the subjects."[112]

I believe it would not be a mistake to argue that habitus represents some kind of *common sense* (both as 'good sense' and 'folk wisdom') for those who were raised in a particular habitus. This argument might be supported by the seeming sense of *naturalness* of habitus (given the above description of how one enters into a habitus) which makes it virtually immune to reformation: any information is selectively filtered through the commonsense knowledge of reality (habitus), the information which appears contrary to this knowledge is effectively dismissed as 'nonsense.' In this sense, habitus is close to Barthesian understanding of myth, for it, too, seems to "transform […] history into nature,"[113] providing 'self-evident truths.' Indeed, any given habitus is "a product of history;"[114] a community`s "incorporated history."[115] According to Bourdieu, there are "two states of history: history in its objectified state, as accumulated in instruments, documents, rites, theories, customs, traditions, styles of language and clothing, and history in its incorporated state."[116] In habitus, "social patterns become natural."[117] As Bourdieu understands it, the "process of naturalisation is accomplished in a particularly successful manner when it is exerted through agencies whose action has the superficial appearance of Nature and therefore seems almost natural."[118]

Habitus, indeed, appears quite natural, as it does not seem to inhibit thought: one can freely produce thoughts, but these thoughts and conclusions will hardly transcend the semantic

[108] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 137.
[109] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 47.
[110] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 82.
[111] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 49.
[112] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 64.
[113] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1957) 107.
[114] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 124.
[115] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 68.
[116] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 77.
[117] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 136.
[118] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 136.

circumference delineated by habitus (or, to be more precise, by the historical or social context of its origin).[119] Any such 'dissent' would be interpreted as nonsense (or, indeed, foolishness or even the symptom of an addled mind). According to Bruner, any (utopian, reformist, or revolutionary) change initiated by a social agent must at least minimally conform to this implicit consensual code.[120] Any effort to initiate action in a particular group is doomed to failure, unless it appeals (again, at least minimally) to the habitus of the group (which, again, is formative of the group`s motivations, aspirations, intentionality). As Bourdieu writes, "[t]hese social laws cannot be transgressed, they can only be transformed, and at the cost of much hard work."[121] Any qualitative change must thus be formulated in the language of the canonical, must appeal to the ordinary. As the following discussion will illustrate, to enlist the support of the masses in colonial America to overthrow the British rule and establish a national polity, the activating elites had to articulate their intentions in compliance with the patterns of thought that the colonists regarded as *common sense*, for "the essence of a [social/national] game is to produce the kind of habitus that does not call the game into question,"[122] that is, to ensure everyone`s "investment in the [national] game."[123]

Habituses are formed in long-term practice, and, as I argue, once the US national identity had been successfully consolidated, it itself became one such habitus for the future generations of Americans. "A generative spontaneity, which asserts itself in an improvised confrontation with ever renewed situations, [habitus] obeys a practical logic,"[124] which makes habitus 'a (situational) necessity made a *virtue*[125] and *nature*. The rhetoric of the *Declaration* (particularly, the phrase 'when in the course of human events, it becomes necessary') demonstrates how "social necessity takes on the guise of natural necessity and exerts its influence through certain mechanisms."[126] "Without necessarily being the product either of a conscious strategy or of a mechanical determination,"[127] habitus nonetheless answers to the situation by producing strategies which become objectively adjusted to that particular situation. The US American national identity was once such a situation-specific answer to the necessity (a situational constraint) to rid itself of British dominion: as Howard Zinn argues,

[119] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field*, 50.
[120] Bruner, *Actual Minds,* 40.
[121] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 135.
[122] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 83.
[123] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 82.
[124] Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology* (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 1990) 78.
[125] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 124.
[126] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 137.
[127] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 90.

there was "no conscious forethought strategy by the colonial elite, but a growing awareness as events developed."[128] Today, it might be argued, the principles and ideals of this identity are indeed held as virtue (once a product of necessity, it has become US America`s habitus, its 'common sense' and *morality*).

In my understanding, through habitus, culture is able to convey a certain commonsense *knowledge* about one`s social (national) reality. The individual self as a national (and cultural) member can be described as a "saturated self."[129] The (national) self is always *content-full*: it is saturated with the content of images, information, discourses, indeed, a certain kind of *cultural* knowledge, or culture-specific "systems of meaning."[130] One`s modes of perception of the self and the world are thus determined *culturally*. Culture is built into political and institutional structures (which it legitimizes and maintains), and is thereby linked to the exercise of *power* over individuals (the *political* control of one`s behavior and orientations, the maintenance of the status quo of power relations, etc.). In light of the following discussion, the national community and its members therefore do not seem to exist as 'content-less,' they are always *saturated*; or *'scripted.'* As has been argued, this cultural knowledge represents a national community`s *'common sense,'* that is, 'a commonsense knowledge of social reality,' which is produced, determined and used by a culture as its instrument. It is therefore a normative 'blueprint' of the transactions/interactions within a community: the 'role' prescriptions, which the social agent learns as he/she enters into the drama through the acquisition of the language. Commonsense knowledge thus comes about in interaction, and becomes what Bruner calls a community`s "the ordinary,"[131] or the canonical, indeed a 'list of self-evident truths' against which reality is judged. As Bourdieu notes, "the activities of our practical sense are part of the ordinary order of our ordinary existence."[132] Habitus in this regard represents 'the habitual' and is thus "a sort of principle of constancy, of self-coherence or […] consistency."[133] According to the sociologist, habitus can be treated as "a mode of knowledge as long as we realise that we need to understand this knowledge as obeying a different kind of logic."[134] This logic seems to be the *habituality* of habitus: "the sense of something 'acquired through experience', by confrontation with the patterns of the

[128] Zinn, *A People`s History of the United States,* 59.
[129] Crossley, *Introducing Narrative Psychology,* 18.
[130] Ian Parker, "Discourse: Definitions and Contradictions," *Philosophical Psychology* 3 (1990): 187-204, qtd. in Crossley, 18.
[131] Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, 47.
[132] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 67-68.
[133] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 100.
[134] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 101.

social world" and "the experience that enables us to get by in life, to be experienced, which gives us […] 'assurance in decision and action in the situations of life.'"[135]

In my assessment, what a national community knows about itself is predominantly "enculturated knowledge:"[136] much to one`s surprise, one might discover that such 'commonsense' knowledge makes no sense at all to someone who comes from a different cultural environment; or appears as outright comic, which appears to one as some kind of *blasphemy*. Here, habitus as 'passion' does not describe "an emotional state but the logic of fetishism - that is, a belief that seems illusory to anyone outside the game, but one that is well founded […] if we see it from the viewpoint of someone who knows the conditions of production of the game and the players."[137] Not only does culture formulate 'the canonical,' but also sets the standards of what is considered *moral*. It thus determines "the good"[138] and, indeed, defines 'virtue' (as has been noted, habitus itself is a necessity made virtue). The knowledge of what constitutes 'the good' is also part of a community`s commonsense; 'the ordinary/canonical' thus might be said to be necessarily 'the good.' Crossley traces a basic link between an individual`s moral orientation and their identity (for example, as a member of a national community): as she notes, "we have a sense of who we are through a sense of where we stand in relation to 'the good.'"[139] The human desire to belong within a group drives one to self-identify with what a reference community recognizes as '*the* good.' "Values inhere in commitment to the 'ways of life,'"[140] while one`s commitment to a particular set of values "locate[s] one in a culture," which enables an individual to effectively participate in their respective culture. 'The good' is articulated through/in language and symbolic systems (custom, ritual) as the tools of culture: 'the good' as a moral source is brought within the reach by *language*, by stories/narratives/metaphors, which confer meaning and substance on a community`s life. These stories secure people`s commitment to and orientation towards 'the national good,' and channel their behavior towards this 'good.'[141] Each community will have its own repertoire of narratives which describe what 'the good'/the moral is: as Bruner puts it, "[o]ur sense of the normative is nourished in narrative."[142]

[135] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 101.
[136] Bruner, *Acts*, 22.
[137] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 85.
[138] Crossley, *Introducing Narrative Psychology*, 15-16.
[139] Crossley, *Introducing Narrative Psychology*, 16.
[140] Bruner, *Acts*, 29.
[141] Bruner, *Acts*, 96.
[142] Bruner, *Acts*, 96.

I therefore might conclude that culture determines a community`s 'common sense,' becomes its map of reality: it organizes a national community`s experience, infuses this experience with substance and meaning, as well as ensures pro-sociality (that is, the abidance by the excepted norms of conduct) of a social actor. Culture and cultural means thus might be described as among "the most powerful forms of social stability,"[143] and by that of a more efficient political control. According to Bruner, cultural interpretation (explication through cultural means) sets in / is triggered in moments when there is a disruption of 'the ordinary' (of common-sense, of how things should be) by 'the exceptional.' Culture-specific explications are thus employed to patch the breaches in commonsense meanings, to return 'the exceptional' to the norm, that is, to the ordinary.[144] As Bourdieu remarks, "social conventions assert their existence when we want to transgress them."[145] Explication through cultural means, as Bruner states, *contains* that which is divergent in a way which promotes "[(re-)]negotiation [of meanings] and [allows to] avoid confrontational dispute and strife."[146] This point will move center stage in the following discussion of the ability of the American Thesis as US America`s national identity to contain *dissent*.

To sum up this part of the chapter, it becomes clear that social reality is imagined and organized in accordance with what is believed to be 'the canonical' and by definition 'the good.' This 'common sense' is materialized / objectivized in the lived reality (for example, in institutions). Such an objectivization sustains the perception of a particular version of reality (certain cultural meanings) as, in fact, the *Reality*. In interaction with others (as within a national community), an individual member grows 'saturated' with the knowledge of their national reality. In my understanding, the acquisition of cultural knowledge would not be possible, were it not mediated by *language*. Language is the principal instrument of cultural learning.

Language as an Instrument of Cultural Learning

A national community (as any other community of individuals) is dependent on language and linguistic practices that people use in everyday interaction to makes sense of itself.[147] In my assessment, the nation`s knowledge of itself is arrived at not through logical or rational

[143] Bruner, *Acts*, 67.
[144] Bruner, *Acts*, 67.
[145] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 135.
[146] Bruner, *Acts*, 66.
[147] Crossley, *Introducing Narrative Psychology*, 9.

thinking, but through linguistic structures and socio-historical narratives. The fundament of meaning, from which one comes to reflect on one`s self and experience is determined by language (signs, images, and power which inhere in them). As Bruner notes, culture supplies ideas, concepts, theories (in other words, some cultural knowledge) through the acquisition of which one is able to become embedded into a culture, to be a full-fledged participant in social action.[148] This learning process is of deeply *social* nature: it occurs in one`s *interaction* with others, and takes the appearance of an individual`s *adaptation* to their environment. This process of socialization is thus "the phenomenon of the adaptation [to] expectation."[149] As Bourdieu notes, "[t]he habitus is the kind of feel for the social world and experience that enables people to adapt objectively, without calculating, at least within certain limits."[150] Social 'survival' in this cultural environment "is secured through the learning mechanisms by which humans acquire those habits or dispositions of adaptive value."[151] One therefore acquires a "feel for the game."[152] Such learning is mediated by language and the products of it. Language is thus history,[153] for "the feel for the game is acquired in playing, which makes it a product of history."[154] Therefore, language is a cultural phenomenon: it represents the world in a particular way, depending on how the sign-referent relationships are mediated by a particular culture. The world of cultural meaning is entered via the acquisition of language, its system of signs and the world representations they refer to.

Another point to consider in relation to language as an instrument of culture is its *constitutiveness*. Language not only facilitates the acquisition of meaning, but also *carries meaning* in itself. As Bruner notes, language does not seem to conform so easily "to the requirements of plain reference or of verifiable predication."[155] Therefore, language contains 'particular maps of reality'/some 'pre-structure,' for any instance of language use (even if it is a factual statement) implies a particular perspective/stance (consider the implicatures, presupposition triggering, etc.). An utterance is thus a certain *perspective* or *stance* imposed upon the world by means of selection, focusing, nuances of meaning, context, discursive context of the speaker/hearer, etc. Language is thus *never neutral*. As Bakhtin puts it, "[l]anguage is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of

[148] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 73.
[149] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 131.
[150] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 126.
[151] Crossley, *Introducing Narrative Psychology,* 32.
[152] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 79.
[153] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 71.
[154] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 80.
[155] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 24.

the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated with the intentions of others."[156] According to Bruner, language is not neutral and can never be so, for language itself as well as an act of its use impose "a point of view not only about the world to which it refers but toward the use of mind in respect of this world." The scholar thus believes that "[l]anguage necessarily imposes a perspective in which things are viewed and a stance toward what we view."[157] Moreover, the above-mentioned *constitutive* capacity of language makes it possible for a message to create reality of its own. Bourdieu calls it "the ontological power of language:" "you can say everything with language'; everything can be said; you can even speak of things that don't exist."[158] Language is capable of creating meaning on its own independently of the *factual* reality, because meaning arises not from the relationship between 'sign' and 'referent' (signs in this sense are meaning-less, meaning-empty), but between the relationships/play between signs themselves.[159] The receiver of the message is thus predisposed to understand/interpret it in the canons of the reality created. Language not only allows for communication (or transmission of some knowledge about the world), but also represents the world (the subject of this communication) in a particular manner: transmission is thus complemented by the creation of knowledge/reality. It therefore creates "the kind of mongrel reality composed of [phenomena] that can exist because all things can be said, and, since all things can be said, all things can be thought and imagined."[160] As I have argued in relation to Anderson`s conception of the nation, the very word 'nation' as if grants existence to this phenomenon, even though it is but a mere mental construct – "[t]hat it has meaning does not mean that it refers to something that exists"[161] or "that something that exists is [not necessarily] something physical, tangible and locatable."[162]

The constitutiveness of language, as has been demonstrated, contributes to the creation of one common reality by creating the illusion of the factual existence (indeed, reality) of certain cultural meanings. All of this is due to "the capacity of language to create and stipulate realities of its own," to give "an externality and an apparent ontological status to the concepts words embody,"[163] even if these concepts are beyond the experienced reality (the concepts of the law, nation, deity, etc.). As Bourdieu remarks, "granting language an ontological status

[156] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* ed. and trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) 294.
[157] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 121.
[158] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 109.
[159] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 64-65.
[160] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 109.
[161] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 109.
[162] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 111.
[163] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 64.

and power implies letting language play an eminently political role."[164] This again brings the two conceptions of the nation as a cultural and political community closer together. To paraphrase Ludwig Wittgenstein`s remark that "[t]he limits of my language mean the limits of my world,"[165] we can say that the limits of my culture in a lot of crucial respects mean the limits of my world, since I tend to see this world via the lens of my native culture.

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To sum up, in this chapter, I have attempted to provide a working definition of the nation. Following the research by such scholars as Greenfeld, Anderson, Breuilly, and Bourdieu, I argue that the nation is a mental construct, that is, 'an imagined political community' whose imagining is conditioned by specific situational and cultural constraints influencing the elite groups in whose interests the adoption of nation identity is undertaken. As can be observed especially in US nationalism, "even the political interpretation of a nation is not completely immune to operating with […] cultural symbols."[166]

As Bruner notes, culture is "constitutive of mind."[167] The minds of the architects of specific nationalisms whose motivations initiated nationalist revolts and the construction of national identities were similarly conditioned by the cultural environment (habitus) in which these minds were nurtured. It is therefore important to study both the structural and cultural contexts which shaped the motivations of the relevant actors who were powerful enough to determine social action which was in turn creating structures. In my assessment, the American Revolution and the birth of the US American nation illustrate the interplay of the political and cultural quite well: the US example demonstrates how "the identity narrative channels political emotions so that they can fuel efforts to modify a balance of power. […] The identity narrative brings forth a new interpretation of the world in order to modify it."[168] The specific situational and cultural contexts, from which the US nation with its peculiar identity emerged, will therefore be the main focus of the analysis in the following chapter which studies the situational constraints that the American Revolution created for the future US Americans and how this crisis was managed by appealing to the fundamental principles of English nationalism as the colonies` *habitus* (cultural constraints).

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[164] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 111.
[165] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, 2001) 68.
[166] Wodak, *The Discursive Construction*, 20.
[167] Bruner, *Acts*, 33.
[168] Denis-Constant Martin, "The Choices of Identity," *Social Identities* 1 (1995): 13.

3. The Contexts of the American Creed/Thesis as US America`s National Identity

Following the above understanding of the nation as 'an imagined political community,' we might ask further questions: *How was US America`s national identity constructed (indeed, imagined) via cultural means? And how did this construction (this imagining) allow to achieve specific political goals?* In light of the conception of the nation as a political as well as a cultural/symbolic community (and both at the same time), and a mental construct at that, it would be interesting to first analyze the contexts from which the US national identity emerged and in which it is firmly embedded; that is, to undertake some kind of 'the archeology of knowledge;' to answer the question: How did US America come to know itself?

As Breuilly argues, nationalism as 'a form of politics' becomes meaningful only when placed in the specific context of its origin (along with the identification of the aims which a specific nationalism allowed to pursue).[169] Therefore, the starting point for the discussion of the US national identity should be the *context* from which the US American nation emerged. The word 'context' here is rather an umbrella term which stands for the various contexts of US America`s national beginnings. In establishing the historical background of the US national identity, it is thus important to study the specific situational context (situational constraints) as well as the cultural context (cultural constraints) of the utterance about the US identity as a nation (or Pierre Bourdieu`s concept of habitus). In this way, I will attempt to demonstrate how these two contexts shape the national discourse which, as has been previously argued, comes to shape the social reality and its institutions. As Greenfeld notes, to study a social phenomenon with its specific "structural factors," we must concentrate on the analysis of the relevant actors as "the creators and carriers of ideas" who are 'caught up' in particular "situational constraints which have a bearing on their interests and motivations."[170] Here, the issue of *power* (the political aspect of nationalism) is closely connected to the analysis of culture / cultural discourse (the cultural aspect of nationalism) which in turn cannot be considered separately from the discussion of power relations which inhere in it. The nation is, after all, a state discourse of the elites.[171] The analysis of the contexts therefore "allow[s] us to

[169] Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 3.
[170] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 19.
[171] Wodak, *The Discursive Construction*, 3.

identify the agents, or actual participants, in this transformation"[172] and thereby those specific situational constraints in which these agents found themselves, as well as the repertoire of ideas which determined the agents` worldview (their 'map of social reality'), all of which contributed to the peculiar character of the US American national identity.

3.1 The Extralinguistic Structural Context of US America`s National Beginnings

I would like to begin the analysis of the US national origins by discussing the extralinguistic / situational context in which the US national identity is embedded. In this sub-chapter, I thus attempt to answer the following question: What were the situational constraints of the US nation`s 'birth'? To answer this question, I would like to turn to the research by American historian and political scientist Howard Zinn whose *A People`s History of the United States* provides an ample historical evidence to the existence of the interested actors (the elites) instrumental in the creation of the sovereign US nation. The historical context of US America`s national beginnings, as Zinn recreates them, thus confirms the fact of the active existence of un upper class (an elite) in colonial America around the time of the birth of the nation as well as in the early national period. As Zinn demonstrates, the elites were guided by the objective to exercise political control over the colonial population before the Revolution as well as over the nascent US American nation in the post-Revolutionary period. Moreover, as will be further argued, the means by which the elite groups sought to exercise political control were primarily *discursive* (cultural).

The Colonial Period

In his research on the American people`s experience of history in US America, Zinn draws the reader`s attention to the fact that the colonial society in North America was stratified along the class lines as well as to the fact that there was an upper class of the colonial elite in Britain`s American colonies in whose hands the wealth and power were increasingly concentrated.[173] The monopolization of power by these status groups was constantly met with resistance and protest. One of the most notorious rebellions was the revolt of Virginian settlers under the leadership of Nathaniel Bacon, hence Bacon`s Rebellion, which "became a

[172] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 22.
[173] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 40.

symbol of mass resentment against the [colonial] establishment."[174] Those who joined Bacon in protest were "part of a large underclass of miserably poor whites"[175] whose condition was truly slave-like and who came to America guided by the 'hopes of levelling,' that is, the hopes to 'equalize the wealth.'[176] According to Zinn, "[l]evelling was to be behind countless actions of poor whites against the rich in all the English colonies, in the century and a half before the Revolution."[177] The reality they faced upon stepping on the American shores was different, though. What in fact made the reality of colonial America was, as Zinn believes, "a complex chain of oppression:"[178] high taxes, rents, control of profit, unemployment, poverty, etc. The colonists were oppressed by the colonial elites who were in turn under the pressure of the imperial center.[179] Indeed, in crucial respects, resentment to the rich elites was conditioned by the new-comers` "hopes of levelling,"[180] which, as I argue, were stoked by the widespread idea that no one had the right to compromise another person`s individual sovereignty (human dignity). This feeling of resentment is in many respects due to the fact that people, coming to the colonies from England, came bearing the national identity of their home country[181] (this point will be elaborated upon in the next section, discussing the habitus of US America`s national origins). As Zinn notes, "[m]ore than half the colonists who came to the North American shores in the colonial period […] were mostly English in the seventeenth century."[182] The specific character of this national identity was determined by a set of core ideas, 'self-evident truths,' which were central to the nationalism of England. As will be further argued, the equality of individual sovereigns, their 'equal station' vis-à-vis one another, was an idea of great power that has occupied the US American mind since the colonial beginnings. However, in Britain`s American colonies, there was no *actual equality*: what made the lived reality was an abyss between *the ideal* and *the real*. Quoting Abbot Smith, Zinn remarks that the colonial society "was not democratic and certainly not equalitarian,"[183] dominated by an upper class who exploited people as means to their personal ends. Therefore, at this point it is possible to conclude that there was indeed an upper class of the powerful few in the North American colonies who exercised "political domination" and

[174] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 40.
[175] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 42.
[176] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 42.
[177]Zinn, *A People`s History,* 42.
[178] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 41.
[179] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 41.
[180] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 47.
[181] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 401.
[182] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 46.
[183] Abbot E. Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971) in Zinn, *A People`s History,* 46.

were "in control of trade and commerce."[184] The reality of colonial America thus reflected "a clear-cut class system."[185] As Zinn contends, "class lines [were only] harden[ing] through the colonial period; the distinction between rich and poor [were becoming even] sharper,"[186] "the upper class was getting most of the benefits and monopolized political power."[187]

According to Zinn, traditional histories tend to emphasize the 'extraordinary' unity of the colonies in their revolutionary rage against England.[188] The historical fact seems to be, though, that there was hardly any *genuine* unity among the colonists; what was indeed present was the rage that had been towering *within* the colonies – an internal class conflict. The colonies were "societies of contending classes."[189] As Zinn discovers, the political authorities were therefore constantly opposed in a variety of protests, riots, pamphlets,[190] to the degree that "the problem of [effective] control"[191] moved towards the top of the elites` agenda. The threat of class violence was ever-present.

As Zinn writes, "[b]y the years of the Revolutionary crisis, the 1760s, the wealthy elite [had] controlled the British colonies on the American mainland"[192] for one hundred and fifty years. In the process, the elites acquired their own fears.[193] The greatest of those fears was the fear of the oppressed groups ("the Indians, the slaves, [and] the poor whites"[194]) uniting against the ruling few. It was therefore important to prevent such coalitions. Apart from the learned fears, the elites "had developed tactics to deal with what they feared."[195] One such tactic was to create *unity* (on the elites` terms) in one segment of the colonial population, while fostering *dis*unity and discord in other segments. Thereby, they sought ways to antagonize the white under class against the black slaves and the Indians, thus creating some sort of a 'buffer' that protected the elites.[196] This tactic, for example, generated much animosity between the Native Americans and the white frontiersmen who were becoming more dependent on the government for protection against 'Indian savagery.' The possible alliance of the poor white and the enslaved black population, the precedent of which had already taken place in the form

[184] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 47.
[185] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 47.
[186] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 47.
[187] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 49.
[188] Zinn, *A People`s History,* 50.
[189] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 50.
[190] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 50-52.
[191] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 53.
[192] Zinn, *A People`s* History, 53.
[193] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 53.
[194] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 53.
[195] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 53.
[196] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 54.

of Bacon`s Rebellion, "caused the most fear among the wealthy white planter"[197] who therefore made a few tiniest concessions to the poor whites and cultivated in every possible way the racial hatred against the black slaves. As Zinn notes, "[r]acism was becoming more and more practical."[198]

Another major development of the time, according to Zinn, was that "[a]long with the very rich and the very poor, there developed a white middle class of small planters, independent farmers, city artisans."[199] The loyalty of this middle 'layer' of the class hierarchy became another lever of control in the elites` hands. This segment of the colonial population was to become "a solid buffer [class] against black slaves, frontier Indians, and very poor whites."[200] Understandably, the representatives of the colonial white 'middle' class were placated in every possible way: they were, for example, protected from the competition from black craftsmen/traders; and granted limited participation in local politics.[201] In my understanding, for this group (the white middle class), as for basically anyone in the colonies, similarly vital were the sense of their *status*, individual *sovereignty* (which had been systematically violated by the British authorities) as well as the desire to preserve and augment *property*. As will be shown, their interests were thus informed by the ideological heritage and rhetoric of English nationalism which became the rhetorical instrument of the American colonial elites` influence on this class or, in Zinn`s words, "a critically important rhetorical device for the rule of the few, who would speak to the many of 'our' liberty, 'our' property, 'our' country."[202] As Zinn notes, "[t]hose upper classes, to rule, needed to make concessions to the middle class, without damage to their own wealth or power […] [t]his bought loyalty."[203] The main tool for the control of the white middle class`s loyalties was therefore a specific *language*, invented, as Zinn believes, by the elites (as will be demonstrated, it is fairer to say that the language was in a lot of respects more *inherited* than invented). It was, according to Zinn, "the language of liberty and equality."[204] I dare argue that this language was in fact the American colonies` *mother tongue* which they learned from their 'parent,' the English nation. This language was therefore the rhetorical device which justified the rule of the few and bound people`s loyalties "with something more powerful than material advantage."[205] First, it was used to "unite just

[197] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 55.
[198] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 56.
[199] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 57.
[200] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 57.
[201] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 57.
[202] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 57.
[203] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 58.
[204] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 58.
[205] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 58.

enough whites to fight a Revolution against England, without ending either slavery or inequality."[206] Later, the language was adopted to unite the 'newly born' Americans into one nation under one leadership (the elites).

The Revolutionary Moment

According to Zinn, the American Revolution was in many respects an upper-class conflict between the new elites and the established/old elites.[207] In my understanding, the British elites increasingly neglected the sovereignty of the American colonies which, as the colonists believed, they had by the right of their national allegiance to the British Crown, to the English nation. As Bourdieu puts it, "there has to be heresy for the orthodox discourse to intervene."[208] Heresy in this case was 'a history of repeated injuries and usurpations' by the British king, while the orthodox discourse was the discourse of 'unalienable Rights,' such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, or, in other words, the ideal of individual sovereignty. In Greenfeld`s words, it was unclear what angered Americans more – the fact that the taxes imposed by the center were hard on their wallets, or that they were not granted representation in the Parliament: as she puts it, "taxation without representation was an insult to their pride, more than an injury to their economic interests."[209] Nonetheless, the latter, in my opinion, can also be viewed as an act of the infringement of individual sovereignty. In any case, the sense of individual liberty and the personal interests of the elites were *equally* hurt. This was the moment when, according to Zinn, the elites realized "that by creating a nation, a symbol, a legal unity called the United States, they could take over land, profits, and political power from favorites of the British Empire."[210] This decision was, of course, not planned, but *contingent*, more like an opportunity than a strategic move: "not a conscious conspiracy, but an accumulation of tactical responses."[211] The main task before the power groups was to "create a consensus of popular support for the rule of a new, privileged leadership," and by doing so to "hold back a number of potential rebellions."[212] The elites needed "to find language inspiring to all classes."[213] The new leadership had to mobilize/persuade the mob to

[206] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 58.
[207] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 83.
[208] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 299.
[209] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 488.
[210] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 59.
[211] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 59.
[212] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 59.
[213] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 68.

rise against the English.[214] They therefore sought to win their allegiance. This task was certainly not an easy one, for the loyalty to England was quite strong among yesterday`s British subjects.[215] According to Zinn, the elites wanted to use *mob energy* (the accumulated class hatred) against the British authorities and, amusingly enough, against the very idea of *wealth* (the disproportionate distribution of it), making the Revolution seem like a battle of the poor against the (British) rich (never against the rich group of the nationalist elites).[216] This strategy somewhat became a tradition: as Zinn states, this was "a forecast of the long history of American politics, the mobilization of lower-class energy by upper-class politicians, for their own purposes."[217]

After the independence had been won, the American leaders however realized that they desperately needed to devise strategies to contain the combustible imagination of the 'democracy-drunk' mob. The elite attempted to build some kind of a rhetorical bridge between themselves and the masses, the bridge of the all-inspiring language of natural rights and democratic rule which seemingly recognized the 'sanctity' of individual sovereignty. This was "the language of popular control" that was "well suited to unite large numbers of colonists"[218] into "a secure consensus."[219] As I argue, although this language was effectively used against England, in its origin, it was *English*: the US American speech consisted of the ideas, images, and metaphors that the English once made use of to rebel against their tyrannical monarchs.

The existence of the political and economic elite in colonial America might further be supported by the analysis of the controversial issue of legitimacy as regards the signing of the *Declaration of Independence*. Jacques Derrida, for example, in his essay "Declaration of Independence" re-assesses the much-mythologized act of the signature and deliberates on the issues of legitimacy and representation. As he remarks, the 'signers' of the *Declaration* claimed authority to draft and ratify the document on behalf of the people, but there was no 'people' before the signing. "The signature invents the signer," the *Declaration* thus invents the people that "do not exist as an entity, the entity does not exist before this declaration, not as such; [i]f it gives birth to itself, as free and independent subject, as possible signer, this can

[214] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 59.
[215] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 406.
[216] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 61.
[217] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 60-61.
[218] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 72.
[219] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 73.

hold only in the act of the signature."[220] The above observation only further demonstrates the degree of the elites` involvement in the construction of nations. In my understanding, the Founding Fathers (well aware of the legal ambiguity of their act) therefore created 'presence' in the place of 'absence.' The elites thus sought "symbolic legitimization."[221] According to Bourdieu, "[w]hat will always save the men who hold this position [of power] is […] legitimation."[222] Bourdieu notes, adopting Max Weber`s terminology, that "the dominant require an ideology to provide a 'theodicy of their own privileges.'"[223] "To establish in whose name it is legitimate to dominate," the elites, expecting "to be justified in existing in the way that they exist - that is, as dominant,"[224] engaged in 'symbolic struggle' "to establish the dominant principle of domination, which is not identified as such, but is recognised and therefore legitimate."[225] The legitimation of the elite groups` status and thus power required an ideological consensus, the very idea of which presupposed the consent of the governed, for "in good symbolic logic, where legitimacy is concerned, a man's best servant is other people."[226] As Bourdieu remarks, ""the essence of a game is to produce the kind of habitus that does not call the game into question,"[227] and a "game only functions in so far as it manages to convince all the players that it is worth taking the trouble to play it."[228] The national game thus implies "the desire to play" and the desire to do it with passion. Bourdieu uses the word 'passion,' for "it is something suffered because we cannot do anything but suffer this interest;"[229] and it seems like the colonists did suffer at the hands of the British Crown, their desire for individual sovereignty became their passion. It is this 'logic of fetishism' behind this suffered passion that makes one "realise that it is impossible to do without it and that nothing is more necessary than this illusion."[230]

As Greenfeld notes, the ideas of English nationalism thus occupied the minds of the American elite and the colonial masses: it was simply the way they were used to seeing the world, their 'common sense' vision of reality.[231] As Bourdieu remarks, "someone who has the appropriate

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[220] Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence," *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971-2001* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) 49.
[221] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 298.
[222] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 298.
[223] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 298.
[224] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 298.
[225] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 293.
[226] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 299.
[227] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 83.
[228] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 84.
[229] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 85.
[230] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 86.
[231] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 402.

habitus cannot help playing."[232] The elites therefore understood (or more like intuitively 'felt') that any explanation of the necessity to declare independence from Britain and to create a new legal entity/polity (the US American nation) had to be articulated along these rhetorical lines. It was because only this rhetoric could stir *public affect*; only this language corresponded to the 'rules of the game,' since "[w]hen you have a feel for the game, you don't enquire into the existence or the raison d'etre of the game; you want to play."[233] The architects thus appealed to the central idea of English nationalism – the inviolability of a people`s sovereignty (as will be demonstrated, it was but a logical extension to the idea of the essential sovereignty of a man endowed with reason). Behind this barnstorming rhetoric was the elites` intention to keep the existing (status-quo) relations of power and wealth *intact*: "in serving [people,] they served themselves."[234]

The Early National Period

The War of Independence resulted in the economic and status dislocation for some groups and the growth of the economic opportunities for others.[235] The victory in the War of Independence opened up new opportunities for the rich American elite to become even richer. As Zinn notes, "this became characteristic of the new nation: finding itself possessed of enormous wealth, it could create the richest ruling class in history, and still have enough for the middle classes to act as a buffer between the rich and the dispossessed."[236] However, was there truly a US American nation in the period following the Revolution? After the Revolution, it became clear how pressing the issue of the establishment of a binding national identity was. As has been demonstrated, around the Revolutionary event, a blurry image of America`s national identity was used to serve the momentary interests of the day; after the victory had been secured, this image needed to be further elaborated on and transformed into a *socially binding* large-scale identity of the new nation, the United States of America. Why was this task so urgent?

As Karl Deutsch defines it, "nationality is a people pressing to acquire a measure of effective control over the behavior of its members. It is a people striving to equip itself with power, with some machinery of compulsion strong enough to make the enforcement of its commands

[232] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 85.
[233] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 83.
[234] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 309.
[235] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 83.
[236] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 83.

sufficiently probable to aid in the spread of habits of voluntary compliance with them."[237] At this point, I can conclude that the supremacy of the elite was the fact of the social reality in the pre-Revolutionary colonies. Therefore, the Revolution was the elite`s *personal* revolution fought in their interests. With the English elites out of the way, the American upper class could finally begin their project of nation building. In my understating, to survive in the new social reality, the elites had to unite the atomized groups of former colonists into one nation, to create a powerful/binding national consensus in the form of a coherent national identity and to make this identity *stable*, thus ensuring the stability of the existing power relations and the distribution of wealth. As Zinn believes, the elites in North America sought to unite "the thirteen states into one great market for commerce"[238] as well as to preserve and augment other kinds of capital (political, cultural, symbolic, etc.) A common national identity was needed to beat the local loyalties and affiliations, to beat "treasonable or seditious discourses"[239] (hence, the Sedition Act, probably the first test of the freedom of expression in US America) in order to create *one nationalist discourse* shared by all. A national identity was therefore to foster unity in an ideological consensus which would have "all the moral and emotional appeal of a religious symbol."[240] Even the word 'United' in the name of the new nation spoke of this desire. As Lieven notes, "a society as diverse and as bitterly divided culturally as America, with its diversity continually increased both by immigration and by the creative and destructive surges of capitalist change, cannot in fact live without strong common myths and the strong civic nationalism which depends on them."[241] Greenfeld`s line of argument supports this point, as she argues that the development of the national idea in US America had been distinguished foremost by its *symbolic* nature: "[i]t has been the fate of the American nation, it is said, 'not to have ideologies but to be one."[242] At first, this system rested on a shaky ground, for the unity in ideological consensus had for long been a project in the making. As Greenfeld describes it, the United States of America was indeed "a union begun by necessity."[243] Necessity is certainly not a pleasant feeling, and one surely attempts to overcome this subjective sense of burden. Therefore, the fear of popular unrest and possible disintegration cast a blight on the bittersweet aftertaste of winning independence. The nation

[237] Karl Deutsch, "Peoples, Nations, and Communication," *Karl W. Deutsch: Pioneer in the Theory of International Relations*, 208.
[238] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 97.
[239] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 82.
[240] Sacvan Bercovitch, "The Ritual of American Consensus," *The Canadian Review of American Studies*, Volume 10, no. 3 (1979): 271.
[241] Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 59.
[242] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 402.
[243] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 422.

was born, but, as Greenfeld has it, "what was born was not the infant American nation, but the embryo; or rather, the nation was born so premature that for the next ninety years it existed only as a potentiality."[244] As will further be discussed in greater detail, the newborn Americans were already in possession of national identity, and theirs was an English one. "A drive for secession," as Greenfeld remarks, "was inherent in the nature of the English nationalism which, furthermore, rendered it legitimate."[245] "The separatist impulse was [therefore] inherent in the very conception of the Union"[246] as the heir to the ideals of English nationalism. The nascent American nation was "a union begun by necessity,"[247] and "the threat of secession"[248] was a tangible obstacle to the development of national unity: "[t]he Union was in perpetual peril of dissolving."[249]

The influence of particularism in US America ("a hundred sects and factions,"[250] as Bercovitch puts it) had always been significant. Like Bercovitch, Greenfeld draws attention to the fact that the colonists and early Americans were a diverse mob of people, all in possession of different, sometimes conflicting, *local* identities: "[t]their local pride as New Englanders, Pennsylvanians, or Virginians was fierce and their sentiments toward the other colonies only on rare occasions resembled brotherly love."[251] In my understanding, the picture of the social reality in the early national period is thus one of considerable *atomization,* reinforced by the ideal of individual sovereignty (the right to secession). To unite these sovereigns under one common (political and cultural) power / authority seemed like a losing battle. As has been noted, there was an actual threat of *factionalism*: such documents as, for example, "Federalist 10" acknowledged the danger and somewhat inescapability of factions/factional strife in US America. Even to this day, as Robert Ferguson notes, "the possibility of collapse through internal dissension continues to haunt both political considerations and the literary imagination for generations."[252] Even within the elites, there was not much cohesion due to the differences in specific aspirations, background, political affiliations, career, etc.[253] One thing that the elites had in common was the desire to protect their interests and preserve their status in the new social reality. A plausible/coherent discourse of national identity was thus in

[244] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 422.
[245] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 412.
[246] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 431.
[247] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 422.
[248] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 431.
[249] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 431.
[250] Bercovitch, *The Ritual*, 273.
[251] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 409.
[252] Robert A. Ferguson, "'We Hold These Truths:' Strategies of Control in the Literature of the Founders," *Reconstructing American Literary History*, Ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986) 4.
[253] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 97.

demand. So was, according to Zinn, invented "the most effective system of national control […] in modern times."[254]

The Road to Unity in Common Identity: The Civil War

The union of the states had been repeatedly contested: as Greenfeld notes, "Americans held some things to be self-evident, but the Union was not among them;"[255] "the forces that could (and eventually did) bring the United States to the brink of disintegration were at least as strong as those which fostered unity."[256] The creation of an authentic *union* was complicated by the differences in the visions of the US American nation (one of such 'debates,' of which Greenfeld speaks, is the difference in views between Federalists and Jeffersonians[257]). As Greenfeld contends, "the possibility of secession as a response to dissatisfaction with the nation was always present."[258] The nation-scale conflict known as the American Civil War, it might be said, revealed the reality of the lack of genuine unity within the national fabric of the young US nation, and was perhaps the greatest historical example of an attempted secession legitimized in the language of one`s entitlement to the rights of individual sovereignty and self-government, the bedrock principles of US American nationalism.

In my assessment, in a number of key respects, the Civil War, just like the War for Independence, was a conflict of regional elites which was this time played out *within* the US nation. The 'stumbling block,' though, was the same internalized ideal of sovereignty, inherited from the ideological repertoire of English nationalism and legitimized by the South`s membership in the US nation: as Greenfeld remarks, "the Southern states felt increasingly deprived of influence,"[259] and, by seceding from the Union, they were exercising "their sacred right of self-government."[260] By its secession, the South was putting US America`s national identity in jeopardy.

It seems that even the abolition of slavery was not an end in itself, given Lincoln`s overall indecision and the passage of the Fugitive Slave act by the federal government.[261] As

[254] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 59.
[255] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 425.
[256] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 444.
[257] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 428.
[258] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 473.
[259] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 474.
[260] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 477.
[261] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 183.

Greenfeld notes, "most Northerners did not regard slavery in the South as problematic."[262] Abolitionism was therefore in many respects a way / pretext to maintain the Union, since it quite well exposed the contradiction built into the Southern claims to individual liberty. Human bondage was seen as an affront to human dignity, and, by that, to the national ethos which avowed to protect this dignity. The affront was therefore to the nation`s foundational axiology, the affront was to *the Nation* (its identity). The South`s separatist sentiment and its unwillingness to abolish the slavery system were interpreted as an attack on the *sovereignty* of the Union and the values of the US nation. The ideals (the local identity) of the South were no longer seen as *American*.[263] It might be somewhat an exaggeration, but the South was in a sense on its way to becoming a nation on its own. However, the South was defeated, and the common national identity, as Greenfeld puts it, "finally achieved a geo-political embodiment."[264] The geopolitical object of national loyalty had thus been established in its entirety.

I argue that the triumph of the Union (of *one nation*) was the triumph of a single/common social reality. As Greenfeld notes, "the Civil War marked the line between the dream of nationality and its realization."[265] The victory *affirmed* the united nation and its national discourse, having practically completed the nation-building project (if it can ever be completed in the US). The Reconstruction that followed created the context in which "the unitary American nation became a primary focus of ideology and power."[266] US America`s national identity, once a "principle of symbolic legitimation," became "the dominant or sole principle"[267] of American nationhood. "A nation of self-made men," US America itself became "a self-made nation."[268]

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Such was the extralinguistic structural context in which, as I argue, the US national identity was born. However, why did the architects of the US American nation conceive of its identity the way they did – in that specific language (in 'the language of liberty and equality,' in Zinn`s words)? As has already been mentioned, the colonial elites and most of the colonial population were the bearers of the English national identity. English nationalism was

[262] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 474.
[263] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 476.
[264] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 480.
[265] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 480.
[266] Richard Slotkin, "Unit Pride: Ethnic Platoons and the Myths of American Nationality," *American Literary History* 13, no. 3 (2001): 472.
[267] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 311.
[268] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 480.

therefore the *habitus* in which those individuals were nurtured. It was the semantic environment which shaped their thought and belief. As this thesis argues, the founders could imagine the new nation only in the way which they considered 'commonsense.' At the same time, to enlist the support of the colonial masses, most of whom were, as it seems, raised in the same *habitus*, the elites had no choice (and they knew no other choice) but to describe the new nation in the terms of English nationalism. The principles of the English national identity were indeed *the* common sense which gave form to the colonists` thought and to which they appealed to justify the colonies` secession from Britain. English nationalism was therefore the *cultural environment* of the utterance about what the new nation was or was to be.

3.2 The Cultural Context of US America`s National Identity

Having briefly outlined the situational context of US America`s national beginnings, I would like to pay closer attention to the cultural context in which the future US nation was conceived. As Bourdieu argues, "agents construct social realities and enter into struggles […] aimed at imposing their vision," and they do so "with points of view, interests, and principles of vision determined by the position in the very world they intend to transform or preserve."[269] In the sociologist`s understanding, the 'field of power,' that is, the field of the dominant class in the social space of class relations ('the social field'), is necessarily "the field of struggle for power between holders of the capital that creates opportunities in [this very] struggle."[270] According to Bourdieu, the 'field of cultural production' (intellectual, philosophical, artistic, literary) exists as a basic element of this struggle for power.[271] Seen from this perspective, the dominant class`s 'will to power' might thus be understood as a struggle to establish "the dominant principle of domination, which is not identified as such, but is recognised and therefore legitimate."[272] The power groups thus "fight to establish in whose name it is legitimate to dominate,"[273] and this struggle is of deeply symbolic nature. Greenfeld voices a similar conviction that social action is determined by the particular motivations of the relevant actors; these motivations however are shaped by the actors` specific beliefs and value orientations.[274] Therefore, as Greenfeld contends, social reality is

[269] Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*, 2.
[270] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field*, 277.
[271] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field*, 293.
[272] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 293.
[273] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 293.
[274] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 20.

"essentially symbolic" and "intrinsically cultural," while social action is "meaningfully oriented action."[275] "[T]he study of meaningful orientations"[276] and subjective meanings of social actors is thus integral to the study of the nation as a social phenomenon. As has already been argued, a specific image of social order is objectivized / materialized into the actual reality from the minds of those who participate in this order.[277] The image is thus very much determined by the content of these individual minds: ideas, values, orientations, etc. The specificity of such content is what accounts for the fact that "social orders are widely variable."[278]

To study the US nation, in Greenfeld`s opinion, is to study "the cultural, subjective, meaning- and model-creating symbolic elements in [its] social reality."[279] In the case of US America, it is perhaps even more important to do so, for the US nation "illustrates the essential independence of nationality from geo-political and ethnic factors and underscores its conceptual, or ideological, nature."[280] As Greenfeld notes, it was "the fate of the American nation […] 'not to have ideologies but to be one.'"[281] The US American case is indeed quite unique in this regard, for the symbolic / cultural constraints predated the situational constraints that arose in the Revolutionary moment.[282] Future Americans brought their own social reality (the image of it in their minds) to North America: the colonists were already in possession of national identity long before the particular configuration of situational constraints around the Revolutionary moment made it possible for them to form a unique *American* identity.[283]

Therefore, since, as has been argued, there is no 'aboriginal reality,' what *makes* 'reality' along with its 'ultimate truths' and 'falsities' ('common sense') is the *meanings and imaginings* which result from "the prolonged and intricate processes of construction and negotiation deeply embedded in the culture."[284] To outline the cultural context that conditioned the peculiar imagining of the US nation, I would like to address the work by Liah Greenfeld for its compelling treatment of the subject matter. Given that culture is

[275] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[276] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[277] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[278] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[279] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 19.
[280] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 23.
[281] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 402.
[282] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 402.
[283] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 12.
[284] Bruner, *Acts*, 25.

"constitutive of mind,"[285] the question I attempt to answer here is 'What cultural context was constitutive of the US American national 'mind'?'

The English Idea of the Nation

According to Greenfeld, the first and the only nation for almost two hundred years was the sixteenth-century English nation with its specific national identity.[286] As Greenfeld further notes, given the dominance of England in the international arena, "the impact of the transformation that occurred in sixteenth-century England on [world`s major nationalisms] is beyond question."[287] The birth of the English nation was thus the birth of nationalism as the phenomenon that would define the world of modernity.[288] Therefore, as Greenfeld contends, the analysis of English nationalism with its specific set of ideas and ideals "is essential for the understanding of the nature of the original idea of the nation, the conditions for its development, and its social uses."[289] I argue here that the analysis of English nationalism is especially relevant to the discussion of the US American national identity, for, as will be demonstrated, it was the English national identity that the United States as a nation was to inherit. The influence of English nationalism on US America was thus direct and most formative. It is perhaps the irony of history that England, which was to battle its colonial possessions in North America, in fact, created its own 'monster' long before the Revolutionary moment: the world's first nation actively fostered the idea and ideal of *individual sovereignty* and raised its offspring in this 'climate of opinion.' England trained US America to conceive of its independence in the terms which would convincingly justify such an act; it provided the necessary ideological repertoire for the formulation of US America`s peculiar national character and national identity.

A series of historical events contributed to the establishment of the nation as the central principle of social organization. According to Greenfeld, the first and most formative event, which set off the chain of structural transformations in the social reality of England, was "the War of the Roses and the accession of the Tudor dynasty to the English throne."[290] The

[285] Bruner, *Acts*, 33.
[286] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 14.
[287] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 23.
[288] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 23.
[289] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 23.
[290] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 44.

structural consequences of this historical event generated a void in the upper classes of the English feudal hierarchy which were to be filled by the Tudors` "new aristocracy from the common people,"[291] thereby creating a precedent of social mobility ("the reorganization of the social pyramid along different lines"[292]) in the formerly strictly stratified society. This simultaneously created a situation of "status-inconsistency."[293] The newborn elite was in need of a new image of social reality and a new identity which would sustain this particular image. The new aristocracy found itself in the state of some sort of cognitive dissonance which was expressed in the incompatibility between the existing idea that status was unalienable from linage *and* their specific situational context (new social circumstances) in which the individuals of relatively humble origin now constituted the society`s elite.[294] In order to legitimize the newly acquired status, the demand was therefore to explain / rationalize this contradiction first to themselves and then to the people.[295] As Greenfeld argues, the idea of the nation was to become such an explanation / rationalization.

A number of further events contributed to the consolidation of the national idea in the minds of the English masses. One of the critical historical moments was the extinguishment of the power of Rome over the internal affairs of England and the establishment of the Anglican Church (this occurred in the historical context of the Protestant Reformation).[296] Protestantism stimulated literacy, which only facilitated the distribution of the national idea that was in turn increasingly formulated in the language of Protestantism.[297] In the years of Mary I`s anti-Protestant policy, Protestantism itself came to be associated with the national struggle (the struggle for nationhood).[298] Another important contribution was made by the English monarchs who were somewhat bound (by the ideological climate of the day) to participate in the nationalist discourse and who conceived of their country as foremost a 'commonwealth' of individuals.[299] The English people`s loyalty to the Crown was *nationalist* at that, while the Crown did not reign over individual sovereigns, but, as a symbol of the English people`s uniqueness and sovereignty, served the nation.[300] Under the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, the concept of the 'commonwealth' had taken on a new meaning of republicanism/republican

[291] Liah Greenfeld, "The World Nationalism Made," *American Affairs* 2, no. 4 (2018): 145-59.
[292] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 44.
[293] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 15.
[294] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 44-47.
[295] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 47.
[296] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 48.
[297] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 53.
[298] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 55.
[299] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 35-37.
[300] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 47-48.

rule, further endowing the English folk with political power and authority.[301] All these events were moving England in the direction of becoming a true nation. Although the Restoration witnessed a return to the old rhetoric, it nonetheless did not imply a "return to the pre-nationalist conception of polity."[302] Therefore, the word 'nation' became synonymous with the people of England: the new lexis in Parliamentary acts began to reflect the new reality in which the society had already been living for some time. The reality was that "by 1600, the existence in England of a national consciousness and identity, and as a result, of a new geo-political entity, a nation, was a fact."[303] 'A nation' came to be collectively understood as a community of individuals of 'separate and equal station,' that is, of the bearers of *individual sovereignty*.

In light of the above discussion, it would be useful to remember Anthony Smith`s ethno-symbolic approach to the nation. Central to his approach is the concept of "a dominant ethnie,"[304] around which modern nations are constructed: dominant 'ethnies' not only create nations, but also "group together certain populations in terms of shared cultural characteristics"[305] that define this nation. *Ethnies* are therefore "named units of population with common ancestry myths and historical memories, elements of shared culture, some link with a historic territory and some measure of solidarity, at least among their elites."[306] Ethnies might be distinguished by repertoires of myths, symbols, values, which are passed on from generation to generation across the whole of the territory and the population (*horizontally* and *vertically*). Ethnicity had never been the central state-/nation-building element in the history of the US nation. US America is by no means a mono-ethnic nation, but the national symbolism (indeed, *the habitus*) in which all members are united have specific ethnic roots (belong to certain *ethnies*): the English national identity seems to be *the* formative *ethnie* in this regard. However, as Greenfeld notes, the ideas at the core of English nationalism were "in no way peculiarly English," but it was in England that they came to be internalized into an entire people`s identity. The ideological heritage of ancient Rome and Greece as well as the culture of the ancient Jewish people (most importantly, the Bible) contributed to the formation of nationalism as a phenomenon of modernity and, by that, defined this modernity. As Smith himself notes: "though most latter-day nations are, in fact, polyethnic, […] many have been

[301] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 75.
[302] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 42.
[303] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 30.
[304] Anthony D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic* (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, 2008) 32.
[305] Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations*, 45.
[306] Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1995) 57.

formed in the first place around a dominant ethnie […]. In other words nations always require 'ethnic elements.' These may, of course, be reworked; they often are."[307] At this point, I would like to linger a bit more over what constituted the central principles at the foundation of English nationalism which was to become the ideological basis of US America`s national ethos, indeed, its very identity.

As Greenfeld remarks, the concept of the nation was at its core *humanistic*: its most fundamental element was the recognition of the essential rationality of *man* which entitled *him* to the freedom of thought and decision, to be the owner of his self, the supreme authority in his life.[308] It was therefore the sacred right to *individual sovereignty* which defined the nature of English nationalism. One had thus been granted the greatest possible degree of liberty to carry out actions and make decisions dictated by his mind. The choice of pronouns is important here, for 'reason' was the attribute of a (white) *man*, *his* privilege. The right to reason was distributed unevenly[309] and was, indeed, a *privilege*: some members of society were considered reasonable by the right of their nature (for example, white men of a specific religious persuasion), and it was to them that the logic of the national idea appealed. Others (women, the representatives of other races and nationalities) were considered as inherently lacking in reason. The possession of the faculty of reason nonetheless became "the basis for the recognition of the autonomy of the individual conscience and the principle of civic liberty."[310] The equality in reason qualified individuals to "participate in collective decisions"[311] (especially those related to the field of the political). A community of reasonable sovereigns, the nation was becoming a common cause, indeed, a *'res publica*.'

As Greenfeld believes, the sanctity of individual sovereignty, legitimized by one`s possession of reason, was further valorized by *scientific discourse*, for science came to *embody* this humanistic, rationalistic and empirical worldview.[312] Science heralded the primacy of *nature* and *natural laws*. Science was in many respects articulating the character of the English national identity: it changed the worldview of the popular consciousness, thereby fostering a favorable 'climate of opinion' for the development of the nation. Nationalism in turn provided science with the necessary *prestige*, strengthening its status in society. As has already been noted, these ideas were *not* exclusively English. However, it was in England that they were

[307] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991) 39.
[308] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 30.
[309] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 30.
[310] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 30.
[311] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 30.
[312] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 78-86.

integrated into the very identity of a people with such success that these principles and ideals became a kind of 'common sense,' a commonsensical knowledge of social reality, transforming this reality forever.[313]

To provide a historical example of the centrality of the ideal of individual sovereignty to the national consciousness of seventeenth-century England, "[i]t was this inability to be English in England,"[314] according to Greenfeld, that motivated thousands of religious Englishmen to depart for the North-American shores. These future Americans were the Puritans, bearers of the English national identity. In Greenfeld`s assessment, the Puritans were 'hard-core' nationalists, for "[t]he Puritan state of mind […] was but a logical development of the national consciousness."[315] It was through the efforts of this religious sect that the democratic/republican stimulus within the idea of the nation was introduced into the social structure of England in the first place. On American soil, the Puritans were among those who were creating the image of *social order* in the new territory (Greenfeld points out "New England`s lead in the interpretation"[316] of the US identity). On the surface, the Puritans demanded only spiritual reform, but many in England understood that Puritanism carried a powerful reformatory potential for the society as a whole: "Puritanism opened wide the gates for the reform of society in general, and implied nothing less than the destruction of the established order."[317] The religiosity of Puritanism aided in the promotion of the movement, in its self-representation and the formulation of its ideology: appeals to religion most convincingly justified the unprecedented reformist claims of the Puritans, claims that logically followed from the very definition of England as a nation.[318] Social change was demanded in the idiom of God`s will and England`s position as a God-chosen nation. It was "through the Puritan mediation," as Greenfeld believes, "that love of liberty became the distinguishing characteristic of America."[319]

As follows from the above discussion, nationalism (national sentiment) postulated "a principled individualism, a commitment to one`s own and other people`s human rights"[320] and thereby launched a series of fundamental changes in the structure of the social reality and the rhetoric of the political culture. As Greenfeld argues, since its inception, the nation was

[313] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 86.
[314] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 71.
[315] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 72.
[316] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 407.
[317] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 72-73.
[318] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 72-73.
[319] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 407.
[320] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 31.

developing as *democracy*; this association survived in nations where the necessary social conditions for democratic development existed.[321] In the case of democratic nationalisms (unlike collectivistic-authoritarian nationalisms), a *new structural reality* predated the emergence of a nation:[322] a people already conceived of themselves as a political elite and had been exercising their political power for some time, that is, "sovereignty of the people was the implication of the actual sovereignty of individuals"[323] (in practice, however, it was done only by a small number of individuals who as if represented 'the people'). Therefore, where the structural transformations of society elevated common folk to the level of an elite (endowed them with 'individual sovereignty'), democracy was possible. Greenfeld refers to this national principle as '*individualistic or individualistic-libertarian.*'[324] This principle recognized in a synecdochic manner the political authority of each individual and, by extension, the authority of the collectivity that these individuals comprised, that is, a national people`s *sovereignty*. The notions of a national people`s sovereignty and its member`s individual sovereignty were indeed the semantic nucleus of the English national idea. Individualistic nationalisms (among which is US American nationalism) are at the same time distinguished by *libertarian* undertones: they acknowledge the freedom of an individual`s will within a nation – s/he is a *sovereign*, a source of power in him/herself, in his/her own right. English nationalism was indeed a unique and truly humanistic phenomenon in that it exalted the national subject as a person of *reason and liberty*, recognized their dignity and value as foremost an individual. Following Greenfeld`s analysis, I therefore argue that the idea of individual sovereignty, "the absolute sovereignty, self-government, or independence of every individual,"[325] was central and defining not only with regard to English nationalism, but also to its 'offspring,' the US American nation.

The National Idea in US America

As Zinn notes, quoting Carl Bridenbaugh, the leaders of colonial America "eagerly sought to preserve in America the social arrangements of the Mother Country."[326] I might add that the elites sought to preserve not only 'the social arrangements' as regards the issue of power, but

[321] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 10.
[322] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 9-11.
[323] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 11.
[324] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 11.
[325] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 412.
[326] Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) in Zinn*, A People`s History*, 53.

also the *ideological/cultural* arraignments of the parent country which effectively legitimized the status-quo power relations. It seems to be especially true in the context of structural *anomie* that the secession from Britain was about to create, for when "a way of construing the world goes out of control,"[327] one naturally seeks to keep "a state of knowledge from being upset."[328] As has been argued, it was the preoccupation with power relations (sustained by status) that was among the leading motivations behind the construction of the united American nation. I argued that the elites` decision to overthrow the British rule was their interpretation of the imperial center`s actions as the abridgment of the colonies` sovereignty. The elites` sovereignty (status) was guaranteed by their being the subjects of the British Crown. The affront to sovereignty was understood as taking the form of the encroachment on economic liberty and the liberty to exercise political power/authority, the sacred right of the British people, as the colonial elites and colonial population thought of themselves. As Greenfeld contends, the colonists, including "[t]he soon-to-be architects of independence," thought of themselves as "true English"[329] and even "better English than the English,"[330] while "[t]he formation of the sense of American uniqueness in no manner interfered with the loyalty of Americans to the English nation and their English national identity."[331] Americans pursued an even purer "realization of an English ideal"[332] at the time when Britain itself, "tired of the revolutionary striving to attain the ideal,"[333] was no longer able to realize it. It was "this sense of exemplary devotion to and implementation of English values"[334] and inability to be 'English' within the British empire, that is, to exercise individual sovereignty and be the masters over "their destinies (and purses),"[335] that got the elites thinking for the first time about the possibility of existence without the British hegemony; in a social reality in which their sovereignty and status would longer come under attack.

By its nature, English nationalism was "potentially self-destructive:" "[a] drive for secession was inherent in [it and], furthermore, rendered it legitimate."[336] The idealistic devotion to the ideal of individual sovereignty was similarly "by its very nature a stimulus for disaffection and revolt, for the more intense the commitment to the ideals, the more sensitive, the more

[327] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 111.
[328] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 118.
[329] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 406.
[330] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 409.
[331] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 409.
[332] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 408.
[333] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 401.
[334] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 409.
[335] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 420.
[336] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 412.

intolerant, one became to the imperfections in their realization."[337] The principle value of English nationalism "made the separation conceivable, possible, and legitimate."[338] The colonies` particular grievances were therefore articulated in the only language that could justify the secession and make it legitimate. As Bruner remarks, "[g]etting what you want very often means getting the right story;" and for the elites, 'to get the story right,' it was necessary to appeal to "what constitute[ed] the canonically acceptable version."[339] The elites had to make their actions "seem an extension of the canonical, transformed by mitigating circumstances"[340] in order to ensure consensus. "Any program of desire and action"[341] thus must be carried out in accordance with the world picture / the map of reality which is believed by most to be *the* Reality. As Bruner puts it, "the value commitments of [a community`s] members provide either the basis for the satisfactory conduct of a way of life or, at least, a basis for negotiation."[342] In the aftermath of the War of Independence, the elites were 'torn' apart by the pressing question: "What was to be the nation of the Americans?"[343] The powerful few thus further needed to create a certain narrative / discourse of national identity in the culturally legitimate language which would serve as such a "basis for the satisfactory conduct of a way of life or, at least, a basis for negotiation."[344] Given the colonists` "devotion to the English ideals," the US American nation was to turn these ideals into reality. "Liberty and equality" thus "became self-evident"[345] for Americans.

After the Revolution, the greatest problem was that while, "[a]s Englishmen, the colonists all belonged to one nation, as Americans, they inhabited different provinces:" beyond their idealistic devotion to the English national identity "Americans of different colonies shared little, and the differences of locale, climate, and economic and social arrangements other than the basic equality of conditions among the white men led to the differentiation of the unique American identity into different local identities of specific colonies."[346] The articulation and adoption of one common national identity binding enough to beat all the local 'prides' and affiliations was necessary to secure a common ideological/cultural space, thereby minimizing the occurrence of popular unrest and the dissolution of the Union. The discursive construction

[337] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 412.
[338] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 420.
[339] Bruner, *Acts*, 86.
[340] Bruner, *Acts*, 87.
[341] Bruner, *Acts*, 41.
[342] Bruner, *Acts*, 30.
[343] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 425.
[344] Bruner, *Acts*, 30.
[345] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 409.
[346] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 409.

of a new identity nonetheless could hardly have taken any other form than the one which was native to the Americans. I argue that the English national identity with its fundamental principles and ideals was the *habitus* (or cultural environment) which nurtured the thought of the future Americans and constituted their 'common sense.' The principles of English nationalism thus constituted the ordinary / the canonical version of reality ('common sense' or, more precisely, 'good sense' and 'folk wisdom'), and by that it constituted 'the good' (the moral). Indeed, the very rationale for the secession from England was formulated in the language of the principles of English nationalism. The founders had to appeal to the idea of individual sovereignty, to the language of predestination and natural rights, etc., but, as I dare argue, they themselves did not 'speak' any other language, for it was *this* habitus that *formed* them. This somewhat denies the elite (the political actors) an *absolute* freedom of thought and action. As Bourdieu notes, "the notion of habitus allows us to avoid two illusions: the illusion of an individual teleology - the subjective illusion […] - and the illusion of a collective teleology."[347] The elite`s strategies were therefore, on the one hand, a response to the situational context (structural constraints) in which they found themselves, while, on the other hand, the architects were 'trapped' in a different kind of context, the inner context of their specific habitus which conditioned their thoughts, motivations and actions. This, of course, does involve a degree of mediation by an individual, for, as has been noted, habitus does not inhibit 'independent' thought, only delineates its 'semantic circumference,' so to say. A strategy, as Bourdieu remarks, "is not cynical calculation, the conscious pursuit of maximum specific profit, but an unconscious relationship between a habitus and a field."[348] To quote Zinn one more time, there was, indeed, "no conscious forethought strategy by the colonial elite, but a growing awareness as events developed."[349] The situation was thus one of "supply creating demand."[350] The architects needed to *makes sense* of the exceptional, and such storied explications, as Bruner observes, will inevitably include an appeal to "some canonical element in the culture."[351] A cultural community`s 'common sense' creates a context in which the subject exists, and which in turn modifies the articulation and expression of the subject`s desires and beliefs. As I understand it, 'supply,' the ideal of *individual sovereignty*, thus created 'demand' for such sovereignty when the colonists felt like their 'birthright' was violated. To act against or to fail to acknowledge what is believed to be common sense would

[347] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field*, 65.
[348] Pierre Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*, trans. Richard Nice (London, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1993) 90.
[349] Zinn, *A People`s History*, 66.
[350] Bruner, *Acts*, 40.
[351] Bruner, *Acts*, 50.

make one appear "insane,"[352] indeed, lacking in good reason. Britain`s actions were interpreted as just that, a series of 'repeated injuries' to the sense of individual sovereignty of its faithful American subjects. The ideals of a national member`s and a national people`s sovereignty were the 'common sense' and 'the good,' while the metropole`s measures were seen as violating this sovereignty, as, in the words of the *Declaration*, 'an absolute Tyranny over these States,' and thus as (by definition) *morally corrupt*.

This argument, of course, might be debated, but there is a degree of reasonableness to this understanding of the motivations behind the elite`s strategies in light of the US American nation building. What the American nation as a cultural community needed most to cohere was "the existence of interpretive procedures for adjudicating the different construals of reality that are inevitable in any diverse society."[353] The diverse society of US America thus had to be "bound in a set of connecting stories, connecting even though the stories may not represent a consensus."[354] The American Thesis (the Creed) became one such 'interpretive procedure.' As I will attempt to demonstrate in the following chapter, by its nature, the American Thesis not only represents a powerful narrative of the US national identity, but also manages to bind / unite the diverse society of US America in one image of social reality (indeed, in one common ideological consensus) and downplay the effects of ideological dissent, thereby creating internal coherence and solidarity, ensuring the constant practice of democracy and generating the necessary opportunities for social change.

[352] Bruner, *Acts*, 40.
[353] Bruner, *Acts*, 95.
[354] Bruner, *Acts*, 96.

4. The American Creed/Thesis as US America`s National Identity

From my perspective as a student of US national culture, US American nationalism is an intricate complex of different, sometimes conflicting and competing, components. It seems to be about ardent faith in progress and change, and at the same time about a similarly semi-religious allegiance to US America`s socio-political institutions. It is belief in an individual`s right to secession and self-expression, while at the same time some kind of reluctance (and even the undesirability of any attempts) to transform the established order. It is belief in the exceptionality of US America`s ways of socio-historical development, which at times gives rise to extreme forms of nationalism. It is the conviction that US America`s unique model of development can be easily applied to the rest of the world, and, moreover, that it is US America`s providential mission to do so. It is about strong adherence to the ideals of equality, while at the same time about the cultural inclination towards hero-making and deification of the rich. It is commitment to the ideals of individual sovereignty and liberty, while at the same time to the virtue of community, which makes the US nation quite conformist, leading to the occasional abridgment of *individual* rights. Finally, it is about intellectualism and modernity and at the same time anti-intellectualist and anti-modern sentiments in their *crudest* forms.

I therefore conclude that US nationalism is distinguished by a considerable degree of *duality*, some sort of the Jekyll and Hyde syndrome, if I can make such an analogy. Quite a few thinkers (listed below) have commented on US American nationalism`s paradoxical combination of the modern and pre-/anti-modern, the progressive and reactionary, the new and antediluvian/radically conservative. Engels, for example, spoke of "a truly American paradox clothing the most stubborn tendencies in the most medieval mummeries"[355] and observed that "in America […] the most antediluvian and obsolete calmly continues side by side with the newest and the most revolutionary."[356] Alexis de Tocqueville noted that American civilization was a result of two *contradictory* elements "intimately united:" "the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom marching" in lockstep (unlike in his native France, where they were "marching in opposite directions"[357]). The US American character thus seems to be made of such polarities – individualism alongside conformity, idealism alongside materialism, equality alongside achievement, individualism alongside commitment. As David

[355] Frederick Engels, "From the Treasury of Marxism: The Labor Movement in America," *Political Affairs* 27, no. 2 (1948): 171.
[356] Engels, "From the Treasury of Marxism: The Labor Movement in America," 171.
[357] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. and ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000) 303, E-Book.

Potter writes, "[t]he most disconcerting fact about these […] composite images of the American is that they are strikingly dissimilar and seemingly about as inconsistent with one another as two interpretations of the same phenomenon could possibly be."[358] Michael Kammen, for his part, describes the Americans as 'people of paradox.' In his Pulitzer-winning book of the same title, Kammen talks about US America`s "dualistic state of mind:" "Americans have managed to be both puritanical and hedonistic, idealistic and materialistic, peace-loving and warmongering, isolationist and interventionist, conformist and individualist, consensus-minded and conflict-prone."[359] In *Negative Liberties*, Cyrus R. K. Patell, drawing on the work by Robert Bellah, acknowledges the existence of two languages within US American nationalism as defined by the principle of individual sovereignty ('American individualism'): the first language represents "the individualistic mode that is the dominant American form of discourse about moral, social, and political matters," while the second language represents "other forms, primarily biblical and republican, that provide at least part of the moral discourse of most Americans."[360] This second language is, according Patell, of rhizomic nature, that is, consists of multiple 'second' languages which are "vestigial, fragmentary, and relatively unarticulated."[361]

For the purposes of my study of the US national identity, I would like to adopt the framework advanced by Anatol Lieven in *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*. Approaching the United States as "the most modern and the most traditionalist society in the developed world,"[362] Lieven identifies the most liberal progressive forces *and* the most radically conservative anti-modernist *counter*forces operating within the US American national self. He thus distinguishes between "[t]he two souls of American nationalism:"[363] the American Thesis (the American Creed or the American Ideology) and the American Antithesis. To adopt Greenfeld`s understanding of national identity as "a set of ideas"[364] or as Bourdieu`s "principles of vision,"[365] the American Thesis as "the set of great democratic, legal and individualist beliefs and principles on which the American state […] is

[358] David Potter, "The Quest for our National Character," in Luther S. Luedtke, *Making America: The Society & Culture of the United States* (Chapel Hill and London: UNC Press Books, 1992) 23.
[359] Michael Kammen, *People of Paradox: An Inquiry Concerning the Origins of American Civilization,* digitized by the Internet Archive (New York: Vintage Books, 1973) 337.
[360] Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996) 334, in Cyrus K. Patell, *Negative Liberties: Morrison, Pynchon, and the Problem of Liberal Ideology* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001) 9.
[361] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 9.
[362] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 5.
[363] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 4.
[364] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 20.
[365] Bourdieu, *The State Nobility*, 1.

founded"[366] thus represents the very identity of the US nation. Therefore, as I argue in this thesis, the US American nation`s narrative of identity exists in the form of the American Thesis as a set of propositions (Bourdieu`s "orthodox discourse"[367]) which makes the "discursive constructions of the nation plausible and self-evident, […] creat[ing] internal solidarity and commitment to the nation state and its policies, and […] represent[ing] the US to outsiders."[368] In my assessment, the central of those propositions is the principle of *individual sovereignty* ('the separate and equal station,' the equality of 'all men' 'endowed by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,' as well as the government, 'deriving [its] just powers from the consent of the governed.') The American Thesis is thus a liberal/democratic force which ensures respect for one`s rights in US America.

In addition to Lieven`s understanding of the phenomenon, I also dare argue that the Thesis constitutes the US nation`s *morality*, because, as I will further demonstrate, in US America, it is seen as morally right to profess the Thesis, and rather immoral to violate its principles. This allows the Thesis as the society`s 'good' to contain divergent (undemocratic) interpretations of the common reality by returning them to the 'ordinary' and 'the good' which the Thesis defines in the first place. Such divergent interpretations of the national self might be subsumed under what Lieven calls 'the American Antithesis,'[369] the strand in the fabric of US American nationalism which is radically pre- and even anti-modern. According to Lieven, the Antithesis is thus "a central feature of American radical conservatism."[370] Articulating its protest/grievances in the rhetoric of the Thesis, the American Antithesis nonetheless creates a force of considerable power which is disruptive to the national unity in the American Creed.[371] Lieven argues that "the combination of these different strands […] determines the overall nature of the American national identity and largely shapes American attitudes and policies toward the outside world."[372] I will return to these phenomena and illustrate the peculiarities of their interaction in the following chapters "The American Thesis: US America`s National Self" and "The American Antithesis: The Disruptive Force within US America`s National Self."

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[366] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 5.
[367] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field*, 299.
[368] Heike Paul, *The Myths that Made America: An Introduction to American Studies* (Leck: Clausen & Bosse, 2014) 17.
[369] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 7.
[370] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 7.
[371] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 5-7.
[372] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 5.

To illustrate the "extreme tension"[373] between the liberal forces of the Thesis and the radically conservative counterforces of the Antithesis, Lieven uses the analogy of a hurricane which is similarly formed in the clash between "[a] mass of warm, humid air" and "a mass of cooler layers of air."[374] To illustrate this point to myself and the reader, I would like to borrow the analogy of the 'order-entropy' distinction from basically any high school physics textbook, for such, indeed, seems to be the 'physics' of US nationalism: the *order* of the American Thesis and the *entropy* of the American Antithesis. As it seems to me and as I will attempt to demonstrate below, while the Thesis creates order (the unity of the Americans in one ideological consensus, and, by that, the observance of civil liberties, namely, the right to individual sovereignty), the Antithesis (due to its entropicity) somewhat challenges these propositions, thereby creating cracks and schisms in the established order. However, in such entropic moments, the principles of the dominant Thesis are applied to new situations produced by the Antithesis (the Antithesis as if illuminates various 'weak' aspects of the social reality). The resolution to such national crises comes to be formulated in the liberal/democratic language of the American Thesis, which only reinforces the nation`s allegiance to its principles and thus secures the constancy of the practice of democracy in US society. Therefore, Lieven remarks that "as in a hurricane or thunderstorm, rather than simply being opposing forces, the two elements which combine to produce this system work together."[375] The entropy and order of US American nationalism are thus complementary forces. Order consolidates that which has been achieved (for example, democratic reform), building it into the existing structure (in this case, into that of the national community). Following the logic of the 'order-entropy' analogy, if order prevails over entropy, the situation is always one of stagnation (the absence of qualitative change). Entropy exposes that which has been achieved to erosion and destruction, thereby opening space for further development and change. The prevalence of entropic forces over those of order leads to the complete destruction of the achieved progress and the existing structure itself, for entropy is never concerned with the assimilation of the 'gains' made. As I will argue in the chapter "The American Thesis: The Assimilation of Dissent," national entropy in the form of the American Antithesis thus stimulates democratic reform in US America: when the existing order is challenged, it is put to revision by the American Thesis which assimilates (antithetical) protest into the practice of democracy, the observance of individual rights. As a result, the US

[373] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 9.
[374] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 9.
[375] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 10.

American nation arises from the ashes of its occasional lapses into "beleaguered hysteria"[376] as a 'renewed' (more democratic) national community. In my understanding, by accommodating the exceptional to the canonical (and the moral), the Thesis thereby manages diversity (the very objective the architects of US nationalism were pursuing). As Lieven observes, the Thesis (with its complex interaction with the Antithesis) has "a special role in holding a disparate nation together:"[377] the principles of the Thesis and their value for the well-being of the nation are in fact "the only things on which [for example] Pentecostalists in Texas and gays in San Francisco can agree."[378] I will return to this point in the following chapter "The American Thesis: The Assimilation of Dissent."

To add to Leiven`s argument, drawing from the work by Richard Hughes on US America`s national mythology, I come to the conclusion that, as a dominant narrative, the American Thesis is told with the aid of specific cultural *languages* (Lieven also seems to acknowledge the existence of these languages as he refers to them as the Creed`s "attendant national myths,"[379] but, unfortunately, does not go into much detail in discussing them). I choose to approach these 'myths' (as both Hughes and Lieven refer to them) as in fact mythic *narratives*, because, as I will further argue, the American Thesis as the nation`s identity is, in my understanding, foremost a peculiar cultural narrative (a discursive construction) of the US nation. These narratives are formally not part of the American Thesis, but are nonetheless closely related to it, for they aid in the *narration* (justification, legitimization, rationalization, and representation) of the US national self. As Lieven notes, "[t]hese myths are not, strictly speaking, part of the formal Thesis or Creed, but help give it much of its emotional force."[380] However, I do agree that these cultural narratives are indeed of deeply mythic nature (I hold with Roland Barthes`s understanding of myth as a language, "a type of speech"[381]); they are thus *discourses* which are primarily *narrative* in their structure. In my understanding, the narratives of *chosenness*, *naturalness*, and *messianism*/*millennialism* help to rationalize, legitimize, and justify the conception and representation of US America in its national identity, the American Thesis. The mythic languages of the American Thesis will be the main focus of analysis in the chapter "The Myths of US American Nationalism."

[376] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 9.
[377] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 5.
[378] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 52.
[379] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 48.
[380] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 52.
[381] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 107.

4.1 The American Thesis: US America`s National Self

In this thesis, I argue that the American Thesis/Creed is the very identity of the US nation. It is the meaning of US America, its common sense and morality. Let us first list those fundamental propositions which constitute the nation`s identity in the Thesis. Lieven sums up "the elements of the American Creed and American civic nationalism" as follows: the Thesis professes "faith in liberty, constitutionalism, the law, democracy, individualism and cultural and political egalitarianism."[382] Like Greenfeld, Lieven traces the origin of these ideas to "English traditions."[383] To somewhat amplify Lieven`s list, I would like to specify a bit the meaning of the general words like 'faith in liberty,' 'individualism,' and thus 'cultural and political egalitarianism.' In line with my argument, the American Thesis is, first of all, belief in *a people`s sovereignty* as one nation (a government, 'deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,' 'the Right of the People to alter or to abolish' an unjust rulership) as well as faith in *individual sovereignty* (the 'unalienable right' to 'Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness') which implies the equality of such *sovereigns* ('the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them'). In my assessment, all of these propositions are rationalized, legitimized and often discussed in the languages and imagery of the mythic narratives of *chosenness* ('Nature's God entitle them,' 'endowed by their Creator'), *naturalness* ('the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God,' 'the Course of human events'), and *messianism* ('with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence').

The choice of words is important here, for, as Lieven argues, it is indeed about *faith* in these principles, nothing less than "a form of religious conversion."[384] The American Thesis is therefore often referred to as the American *Creed.* The very word 'Creed,' as we can see, has connotations of religiosity and religious fervor. The faith in the American Creed indeed reaches religious proportions in the United States: Sacvan Bercovitch, whose analysis of the 'symbolic construction of America' will come into focus in the following chapters, similarly describes the ubiquitous ideological consensus that he encounters in US America as having "all the moral and emotional appeal of a religious symbol."[385] I would dare argue that the American Thesis (as the community's morality) is indeed perhaps the only *state* religion of the US. As Lieven contends, the principles of the American Thesis are "not exceptional to

[382] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 49.
[383] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 49.
[384] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 48.
[385] Bercovitch, "The Ritual of American Consensus," 271.

America; most of the beliefs are also held by the other developed democracies."[386] What is indeed exceptional about the propositions of the American Thesis is, in Lieven`s assessment, "the sheer unanimity of belief in these guiding national principles,"[387] or, the fact that, as once in England, these ideas were "able to become the content of the people`s very identity, […] rooted so firmly in the consciousness, both individual and collective, [as well as] the culture."[388] Lieven therefore identifies *two most exceptional features* of the American Thesis as US America`s Creed: the "absolutist passion" with which the principles of the Thesis are championed, and "the degree to which they are integral to American nationalism."[389] The American Thesis thus constitutes the language and logic of American civic nationalism ("the foundation for American civic nationalism,"[390] its 'common sense') and allows for the self-representation of the United States as "an example of civic nationalism *par excellence*."[391] According to Greenfeld, US nationalism is indeed quite exceptional, for US America managed to *absolutize* the very idea of the nation (along with its inherent values) and became perhaps its most ardent practitioner: as the scholar notes, Americans "remained faithful to the original idea of the nation, and [came] closest to the realization of the principles of individualistic, civic nationalism."[392] "So pervasive is the American Creed or Ideology in American culture"[393] that Lieven comes to the conclusion that this 'absolutist passion' of faith in the Thesis is perhaps what accounts for the phenomenon of "compulsive nationalism"[394] in US national culture.

Lieven goes even further and concludes that the Thesis is so pervasive that it may in fact be compared to some kind of "black magic," or even a "knee reflex"[395] in that it similarly suspends independent/divergent/uncanonical thought (outside the semantic circumference delineated by the Thesis) in its adherents. Lieven thus believes that it is this effect produced by the Thesis that accounts for the country`s "intense national solipsism."[396] Given my understanding of the Thesis as US America`s common sense and morality ('the national good') as well as the above observation that the threat of secession is persistent in the US nation, it is therefore logical to conclude that any dissent in US America that does not

[386] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 49.
[387] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 50.
[388] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 86.
[389] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 49.
[390] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 48.
[391] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 48.
[392] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 484.
[393] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 63.
[394] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 49.
[395] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 56.
[396] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 4.

conform to the principles of the Thesis would be marked as immoral and 'nonsensical' or even indeed delusional. This point will be elaborated upon in the following chapter "The American Thesis: The Assimilation of Dissent." At this point, it suffices to conclude that, as has been demonstrated, the Thesis as the US national identity not only rationalizes and legitimizes the discursive construction of the US nation, but also binds US America`s national community in a powerful ideological consensus.

4.2 The American Antithesis: The Disruptive Force within US America`s National Self

The American Antithesis is not so uniform in its ideological orientations and aspirations, though. As Lieven contends, the Antithesis is a complex national tradition which contains most diverse images of the social reality of US America as well as of the world in general.[397] In my understanding, the American Antithesis represents a variety (and a clash) of opposing/dissenting narratives rooted in specific ethnoreligious traditions: these include the anxieties and grievances of "the original, 'core' White Anglo-Saxon and Scots Irish populations of the British colonies in North America; the specific historical culture and experience of the White South; the cultural world of fundamentalist Protestantism; and the particular memories, fears and hatreds of some American ethnic groups and lobbies."[398]

The American Antithesis thus represents a radical form of US nationalism and constitutes the nucleus of US America`s radical conservatism.[399]As Lieven notes, "[r]adical nationalism has many fathers, but its mother is defeat, and her milk is humiliation."[400] These particular nationalisms within the 'umbrella' nationalism of US America are thus nourished by the sense of defeat and the resulting attitudes of embitterment and militancy. Why do these antithetical segments of the US population feel increasingly defeated and thus embittered and alienated within their *own* nation? To answer this question, we need to return to the very definition of the phenomenon of the nation. All the scholars of nationalism on whose research I draw in this thesis (Anderson, Breuilly, Greenfeld, Smith) approach nationalism and the nation as the products of modernity. Greenfeld`s Weberian understanding of any social order as an objectivization / materialization of its image from the minds of those who participate in this

[397] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 5.
[398] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 91.
[399] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 7.
[400] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 88.

order[401] allows the scholar to conclude that, "[r]ather than define nationalism by its modernity," we would be well advised to see "modernity as defined by nationalism."[402] The American Thesis which founded the US nation ideologically thus also belongs to modernity and to a great extent shapes/defines it. The very term 'Antithesis,' as Lieven uses it, implies a certain degree of resistance to and even revolt against the Thesis and the social reality it creates, that is, against the world of *modernity* itself. As Lieven rightfully notes, "many Americans are in revolt against the world which America itself has made;"[403] against the many trends of modernity that drive these people into feeling "embattled, embittered and defensive."[404] These antithetical groups thus feel increasingly *defeated* by modern change (initiated and sustained not least by the Thesis) which is interpreted by them as "a form of daily assault on their passionately held values."[405] According to Lieven, the sense of defeat and humiliation that inheres in the Antithesis is therefore generated by what seems like an act of coercion to adapt to "a model of modernity and progress which [the Antithesis] did not create and over the shape of which [the antithetical groups] have had little say."[406] I believe it might be argued that modernity (heralded by the Thesis) violates what these antithetical groups consider to be 'the canonical,' and thus 'the good' (their particular understandings of what makes common sense and the morally right). Judging by the list of the antithetical groups within the US nation that Lieven provides, we might conclude that these antithetical images of the world are quite old (older than the national idea, in fact); some of them can be traced back as far as the biblical times (for example, the religious fundamentalism of the American South). According to Lieven, the character of these radical antithetical narratives can be expressed in "the 'three Rs' of extreme nationalism:" "Reaction against the tendencies of the present; Resistance to Change; and Radicalism, which has radical change in mind."[407] The practice of the Antithesis (of extreme nationalism) by these groups thus fuels "the mood of beleaguered hysteria"[408] as well as the national paranoia of the perceived threat to the nation`s sovereignty, cultivates a culture of hatred and violence, and occasionally tampers with domestic policies, thus wielding a great deal of influence on the nature of US America`s nationalism. According to Lieven, the American Revolution itself, although rationalized in the language of the Thesis, *did* contain such elements of resistance to modernity. The King was

[401] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[402] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 18.
[403] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 7.
[404] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 8.
[405] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 8.
[406] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 89.
[407] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 117.
[408] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 9.

seen as having betrayed the ancient English liberties by having started to rule in a novel way (indeed, dared to violate the canonical). As Lieven notes, "[a]t least some aspects of the American Revolution itself were founded in a 'dread of modernity.'"[409] Nonetheless, US America was by and large heralding modernity: everything about it was new and indeed revolutionary; its national organization was decisively Modern.

In reference to the American Antithesis, Lieven identifies another central feature of US radical nationalism: the "rhetoric of 'taking back' America and restoring an older, purer American society."[410] Lieven notes that if the Thesis might be somewhat radical in its decisive orientation towards the nation`s glorious future (the language of messianism will be discussed in the concluding chapter), then the Antithesis is radical precisely because "it continuously looks backward, to a vanished and idealized national past" and seeks to restore the image of that past in the social order of the day (to "return to an idealized past, of a culturally and ethnically purer nation"[411]). In my understanding, Richard Hughes`s analysis of US national mythology supports Lieven`s argument as regards the US antithetical groups` resistance to modernity and their ideological orientation towards the past. Hughes approaches this feature of US radical conservatism within the context of 'the myth of the eternal return.' Drawing on Mircea Eliade, Hughes pays attention to how these groups (conservative Americans that practice antithetical nationalism, Hughes refers to them as 'traditional people') seek to make modernity, that is, "the secular world of rapid change," "bearable and meaningful by living symbolically and mythically in a sacred time, of the founding of their world." As these 'traditional people' seek to objectivize their specific images of the world into US America`s contemporary social reality, the United States has been reenacting "the restoration vision […] with such regularity that it has become an American version of 'the myth of the eternal return.'"[412] The pursuit of an idealized past thus generates much tension (expressed in irrational fears, animosity, hatred, etc.) *within* the nation living in modernity as defined by the Thesis, and is often projected on the outside world.

Although in revolt against modernity and its key aspects, the US antithetical groups are, as Lieven believes, not in (at least public) revolt against the Thesis as such.[413] These antithetical strands within US nationalism "are usually subordinate to American civic nationalism

[409] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 119.
[410] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 7.
[411] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 90.
[412] Richard Hughes, *Myths America Lives By: White Supremacy and the Stories that Give Us Meaning* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2018) 121.
[413] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 7.

stemming from the Creed, which dominates official and public political culture."[414] Moreover, if asked, these individuals would most likely voice their strong faith "in the American democratic and liberal Creed."[415] However, the specificity of these 'traditional people`s' allegiance to the national Creed seems to reside in their peculiar understating of it. Not only do they strongly believe that the American Thesis is "the product of a specific White Christian American civilization, and that both are threatened by immigration, racial minorities and foreign influence,"[416] they would also tend to have a specific understanding of the central ideal at the heart of the Thesis, the ideal of individual sovereignty / liberty. As Lieven notes, "although this [antithetical] culture is devoted to freedom, it is not devoted to 'negative freedom,' […] but to a kind of positive freedom."[417] Introducing the subject matter of *Negative Liberties*, Cyrus R. K. Patell identifies the complex co-existence of two conflicting understandings of individual freedom within US American national culture: the negative and positive conceptions of the nature of individual freedom. In Patell`s opinion, "negative liberty is the alpha of U.S. culture, its founding premise and point of departure."[418] In my interpretation, the phrase 'its founding premise and point of departure' refers here to what this thesis understands as the American Thesis, the 'baseline' narrative of the US national identity. In Patell`s understanding, negative freedom is about 'an individual`s right to…'[419] as well as 'freedom from…:'[420] "the free individual has an innate dignity that is protected through the possession of certain rights that have the effect of creating a sphere of privacy over which the individual is master, free from constraints, protected from the incursions of others."[421] The individual is thus in possession of individual sovereignty which protects them from being "subject to the will of others."[422] The positive conception of freedom, on the other hand, views the free individual`s exercise of sovereignty and self-government "as intimately related to one's communal commitments and attachments."[423] This understanding thus advocates 'freedom to…' – freedom to be actively involved (to actively exercise one`s sovereignty) in the national community`s life, its social and political spheres,[424] to protect it (its sovereignty

[414] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 6.
[415] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 8.
[416] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 8.
[417] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 119.
[418] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 19.
[419] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 13.
[420] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 14.
[421] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 14.
[422] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 14.
[423] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 14.
[424] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 14.

as a community) against foreign influences.[425] As Hughes observes, at some points in the national history, this 'moral obligation' to exercise sovereignty in one`s service to community resulted in full-fledged reform like, for example, the passage of the 1919 Volstead Act and the 1920 Eighteenth Amendment/Prohibition through the efforts of the antithetical groups active in US American revivalism.[426] Before the 1960, individuals affiliated with such antithetical groups were, according to Hughes, in full control of the federal government, while *Time* magazine named 1976 "the Year of the Evangelical."[427] In my understanding, this "quest for cultural dominance"[428] within one`s community on the part of antithetical Americans is thus an apt example of their positive conception of human liberty. This valorized active involvement in the community`s affairs seen as the practice of one`s sovereignty is also what accounts for the power of the effect of US radical conservatism on US nationalism in general.

As Patell notes, if negative liberty is sometimes called "the liberty of the moderns," then positive liberty is often referred to as "the liberty of the ancients."[429] While negative liberty protects an individual`s rights, the positive (antithetical) conception of liberty tends to "emphasize [an individual`s] responsibilities and duties."[430] As Patell argues, the interplay of the negative and positive notions of individual liberty/sovereignty "is the central feature of the official narrative generated by U.S. culture around the idea of individualism [and] the nature of freedom."[431] In my interpretation, although the Thesis does not specifically refer to 'negative liberty' rather to universal human liberty, its conception of the nature of freedom is nonetheless decidedly negative: it was the *Declaration of Independence*, the first articulation of the America Thesis, that wove "negative liberty into the very fabric of U.S. cultural life."[432] The antithetical conception of individual liberty is, on the contrary, positive: the Antithesis views individual self-realization as inconceivable in isolation from community. The Antithesis thus professes a more dramatic association of one`s self with one`s respective community (in this case, with the national whole).[433] The example of the South's secession from the Union might well illustrate this point. As Greenfeld outlines the process of the consolidation of the US nation, the scholar remarks that Southerners actively demanded that their unalienable right to self-government (sovereignty) be thoroughly recognized within the

[425] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 7.
[426] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 101.
[427] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 101.
[428] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 100.
[429] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 15.
[430] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 17.
[431] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 15.
[432] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 46.
[433] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 17.

Union.[434] It was because they felt that this right was repeatedly abridged that the South seceded. The problem with the Southerners' interpretation of individual liberty was, according to Greenfeld, that individual sovereignty as manifested in self-government can "not be made into a communal right," it is "the inalienable right of individuals, and only in this sense [is] it meaningful."[435] The sovereignty of a community thus derives from "the composite liberty of its members."[436] As Greenfeld concludes, "[a] collectivistic interpretation of this value [is but] a distortion of its original – its American – meaning."[437] The issue of slavery was thus instrumental in highlighting this semantic contradiction.

Therefore, as Patell contends, those who practice positive freedom (the antithetical groups) "want authority to be 'placed in their own hands,'" while "those who advocate negative liberty [seek] to curb authority as such."[438] According to Patell, both interpretations of individual freedom of which the Thesis and the Antithesis speak "originate[…] in the desire to be one`s own master,"[439] to exercise one`s sovereignty. Seemingly two interpretations of a single concept (something the US nation tries to convince itself of[440]), both are not however "in teleological relation"[441] and represent two diametrically opposite and *irreconcilable* views of the world. As Lieven observes, liberty as conceived by the Antithesis is "tightly circumscribed by communal culture."[442] The liberty of those who are not formally part of these culture and community (cultural aliens or deviants) "therefore can legitimately be circumscribed by authoritarian and even savage means, as long as the aim is to defend the community and reflects the will of the sound members of the community."[443] Following the logic of the conception of freedom as advocated by the Antithesis, the exercise of individual sovereignty is thus limited to / appropriated as a prerogative by specific groups along the moral, cultural, and even ethnic lines of their respective communities, hence the antithetical resistance to "the rise of Blacks, gays, feminists and other hated [minority] groups."[444]

To sum up this section, such seems to be the portrait of the American Antithesis. Following Lieven`s analysis, I therefore argue that, as a set of divergent / dissenting narrative images of the US and the world, the American Antithesis represents a disruptive force which divides the

[434] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 479
[435] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 480.
[436] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 480.
[437] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 480.
[438] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 18-19.
[439] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 17.
[440] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 19.
[441] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 19.
[442] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 119.
[443] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 120.
[444] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 92.

nation along the lines of conflicting agendas and local identities, cultivates animosity of one group of individuals against another such group with an opposing set of conceptions and affiliations (all guaranteed by the ideal of individual sovereignty). As Lieven notes, the conservatism of US America`s antithetical segments of the population per se does not seem to be the problem, for there are indeed some unpleasant tendencies in today`s world of modernity, while many traditional values may indeed contribute to the health of any society. In Lieven`s opinion, the main problem resides in the fact that the Antithesis "react[s] not only against the negative features of modernity but against modernity in general."[445] The Antithesis thus occasionally fosters conflict and schism as regards the meaning of US America`s national self (indeed, the meaning of US America *itself*) and tampers with the practice of democracy as well as the progression of modern change.

4.3 The American Thesis: The Assimilation of Dissent

In her study of US nationalism, Greenfeld notes that "[t]he national commitment of America – to liberty and equality [indeed, to the Thesis] – remains the main source of social cohesion and the main stimulant of unrest in it."[446] As she further adds, "[t]he rigidity of loyalty to these national ideals, as well as its laxity, endangers the nation; yet this loyalty preserves it."[447] In my opinion, this quotation aptly sums up the argument of this chapter: while the American Thesis fosters cohesion within the diverse US nation and ensures that it stays loyal to the promises of democracy and individual liberty, it nonetheless (by its nature) stimulates and legitimizes dissent. However, as I argue, the 'black/white' magic of the American Thesis as the US national identity and hegemon cultural narrative resides in the fact it nonetheless succeeds in bringing this dissent, that is, the exceptional / non-canonical, back to the routine *canonicality* (the ordinary) as defined by the Creed.

The last point might be well illustrated by the fact that even the Antithesis, which produces the greatest effect (in the form of antithetical dissent) on US nationalism, is, according to Lieven, "subordinate to American civic nationalism stemming from the Creed."[448] As the scholar adds, the forces of the American Antithesis are "not in public revolt against the

[445] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, viii.
[446] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 484.
[447] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 484.
[448] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 6.

American Creed and American civic nationalism as such."[449] The paradox here is that even those Americans who profess the ideas and values which are quite often in striking opposition to the principles of the Thesis "generally believe strongly in the American democratic and liberal Creed,"[450] and fashion their antithetical revolt as in fact motivated by the sense that the Creed is threatened by foreign forces. The American Thesis is thus able to successfully contain the disruptive potential of antithetical dissent as represented by the Antithesis. At such moments of secessionist crisis, the American Thesis steps in to resolve the crisis and thus manifests itself, in Lieven`s opinion, as US America`s "self-correcting mechanism."[451] Indeed, as Bourdieu notes, "there has to be heresy for the orthodox discourse to intervene."[452] Therefore, the Thesis as US America`s 'self-correcting mechanism' assimilates dissent ('heresy') and once and again returns the nation to the common denominator (one common identity under the banner of the Creed). In my understanding, this is what Bourdieu describes as some kind of "the instantaneous adaptation operated by the feel for the game, and the game itself."[453] This 'self-correction,' in Lieven`s opinion, seems to contain US America`s antithetical "impulse to dictatorship," and, as I argue at the end of this chapter, guarantees the constancy of democracy and democratic reform within the nation. Drawing on the analysis by Greenfeld, Lieven, Bercovitch, and Patell, I therefore conclude that, in US America, the 'mainstream' as well as the dissenting groups lobbying their specific interests *all* seem to appeal to the Creed/Thesis as their baseline axiology. As has been demonstrated, the dissenters themselves quite rarely revolt against the Thesis itself (against its principles, the central of which is the sacred status of individual sovereignty). "A vital function" of the American Thesis as a national identity is therefore "to reconcile such conflicting pressures, or rather to create an appearance of doing so which is sufficiently convincing to the society concerned."[454] In *Negative Liberties*, speaking of the dominant narrative of individualism in US culture (which I understand as the narrative of the Thesis, since US America`s devotion to individualism is legitimized by the value of individual sovereignty advocated by the Creed), Patell, too, notes how the ideology of US nationalism (the Thesis and its attendant myths) "includes contradictions, but it also seeks to rein them in, to prevent them from causing disruptions."[455] Indeed, as Lieven remarks, while the ideologies of other states are often revolted against by "large parts of the populations concerned," in the case of US America,

[449] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 7.
[450] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 8.
[451] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 118.
[452] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field*, 299.
[453] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field*, 81.
[454] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 10.
[455] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 44.

"[e]ven most American dissidents throughout history have sincerely phrased their protests not as a rejection of the American Creed as such, but rather as a demand that Americans, or American governments, return to a purer form of the Creed or to a more faithful adherence to it."[456] As I have already argued in the above analysis of Bourdieu's concept of habitus, any 'dissent' from the canonical version of social reality would be interpreted as nonsense (indeed, a dangerous delusion / delirium). Lieven similarly believes that "[g]roups which really step outside the Creed soon find themselves marginalized or even suppressed."[457] Following the logic of Bourdieu`s notion of habitus as some kind of 'common sense,' we might conclude that if one seeks to introduce any qualitative change into a social order, one must at least minimally abide by a community`s implicit consensual code.[458] A social agent`s utopian, reformist, or even revolutionary claims must therefore be articulated (again, at least minimally) in the language and logic of a community`s habitus, for it is these 'language and logic' that determine a community`s 'common-sense' vision of social reality in the first place. As Bourdieu writes, "[t]hese social laws cannot be transgressed, they can only be transformed, and at the cost of much hard work."[459] For any dissent to be recognized as legitimate, it must be formulated in the language of *the canonical*, must appeal to *the ordinary*. As I argue in this thesis, in the case of US America, the canonical is the Thesis/Creed.

To illustrate this point, I would like to remember perhaps of one of the greatest historical precedents of antithetical dissent in US America, the American Civil War. Indeed, so strong was the effect of the South`s antithetical dissent that it drove the US American nation (not yet truly 'united') to the verge of possible dissolution. Greenfeld notes in this regard that the South`s opposition to the Union was conceived of, articulated and presented in the language of the Union`s foundational ethos, its very identity.[460] Moreover, it was "presented as a stand in defense of American – national – ideals."[461] As Greenfeld argues, Southern nationalism and secession both responded "to the unbearable inconsistency between American ideals and slavery:"[462] to practice slavery and remain within the nation which extols an individual`s rights to liberty and self-government meant to live in the state of cognitive dissonance, of unbearable psychological stress. However, "with the exception of slavery, nothing was so

[456] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 50.
[457] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 50.
[458] Bruner, *Actual Minds,* 40.
[459] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field,* 135.
[460] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 431.
[461] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 431.
[462] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 476.

dear to [the Southern] heart"[463] as liberty. It is indeed a major paradox that the South, fighting for the preservation of the institution of human bondage, in fact "fought for liberty:"[464] the chief concern of the South "in secession was to preserve [its] sacred right of self-government."[465] It was just that slavery was understood as an essential requisite for the South`s exercise of liberty / sovereignty; "slavery was requisite for the preservation of liberty."[466] As Greenfeld contends, "'self-government' was the watch-word of the South."[467] Within the Union, the South thus voiced its demand for the recognition of the right to self-government, and when the Southerners felt that this right was not properly respected, they seceded.

To somewhat add to the above discussion, I would like to address the work by Sacvan Bercovitch and briefly outline his observations of how resistance and dissent in US America tend to be formulated in the semantics of the Creed. Just like the scholars cited above, Bercovitch, too, identifies some kind of *a preferred model* of resistance and protest in the US nation. Although he does not refer to it as the Thesis or the Creed, I dare conclude that this 'preferred model of resistance' is in fact the model provided by the Thesis as the nation`s foundational ethos and identity. Sacvan Bercovitch understands US America as "a process of symbol making through which the norms and values of a modern culture were rationalized, spiritualized, and institutionalized – rendered the vehicle, as the American Way, both of conscience and consensus."[468] In his work on the 'symbolic construction' of the US, Bercovitch studies the *music* of US America. He as if inquires, What symbolic constructions make the choir of the Americans, as unlike each other as they could possibly be, sing the same national hymn in such *unison*?

First of all, Bercovitch, like Greenfeld and Lieven, identifies the secessionist impulse within US culture that is guaranteed by the sacred right of individual sovereignty ("a transcendental license to have your dissent and make it,"[469] as he calls it) and that, as has been argued, is potentially destructive to the national unity of US America. Therefore, a drive for secession is simply inherent in the nature of US nationalism. The following questions thus arise: How is dissent practiced in US America? How is it rationalized? How come that diversity and dissent

[463] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 476.
[464] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 477.
[465] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 477.
[466] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 477.
[467] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 479.
[468] Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014) 12.
[469] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 22.

seem to end up assimilated into conformity and loyalty, thus affirming the virtue of the community? The question is thus why in the US American national community otherness constantly returns to sameness? Bercovitch describes this phenomenon as 'a rite of assent' or 'the ritual of consensus.' If I understand Bercovitch`s point correctly, I dare interpret this 'rite/ritual of assent' as US America`s ideological consensus in its national identity and thus as foremost the assent to and the ritualistic re-affirmation of the fundamental principles of the American Thesis. As Bercovitch notes, "what I discovered [in US America] was a corporate identity built on fragmentation and dissent: a hundred sects, factions, schools, and denominations, each apparently different from the others, yet all celebrating the same mission;"[470] indeed, "a vast Pequod's-crew of self-declared isolatoes, joined together in a deafening *concordia discors*."[471] As Bercovitch elaborates, "[t]o a Canadian sceptic, a gentile in God`s Country, it made for a breathtaking scene: a pluralistic, pragmatic people openly living in a dream, bound together by an ideological consensus unmatched by that of any other modern society."[472] This, according to the scholar, gave him "something of an anthropologist`s sense of wonder at the symbols of the tribe."[473] Following Bercovitch`s observations, I therefore argue that the 'ideological consensus' to which the scholar refers ("a system of values, symbols, and beliefs, and a mode of socialization designed to keep the system going"[474]) is exactly the consensus in the dominant Thesis which is able to accommodate / habitualize dissent by circumscribing the semantic field within which such dissent is formulated and even conceived of. The American Thesis is thus "a ritual of consensus that diffuse[s] all issues in debate by restricting the debate itself, symbolically and substantively, to the meaning of America."[475] Quoting Fredric Jameson, Patel also argues that the language of US individualism (the American Thesis) "powerfully deflects and deforms everything that passes through it; like a system of cartographic projection, it translates the content offered it into the style and specificity of its own volumes and contours, with the Wittgensteinian consequence that whatever it cannot express falls outside of social reality.''[476] This leads Patell to conclude that this is "the language into which we [Americans] are locked."[477] It follows, then, that the 'dark/white magic' of the Thesis resides in its ability

[470] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 29.
[471] Bercovitch, *The Ritual*, 272.
[472] Bercovitch, *The Ritual*, 272.
[473] Bercovitch, *The Ritual*, 271.
[474] Bercovitch, *The Ritual*, 272.
[475] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 49.
[476] Fredric Jameson, "On Habits of the Heart," in *Community in America: The Challenge of "Habits of the Heart,"* ed. Charles H. Reynolds and Ralph V. Norman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998) 105, in Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 19.
[477] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 9.

to accommodate/channel *all* kinds of dissent (radical, conservative, revolutionary, religious, gay, feminist, ethnic, individualist, collectivist, etc.) into the celebration of the American nation, of the American Way, which creates the situation of what Lieven calls "an intense national solipsism."[478]

"[F]or the victims of sexism, racism, and other forms of group-oriented discrimination," this feature of the Thesis and its promises is however "simultaneously the source and the frustration of hope."[479] In my understanding, the Thesis is 'the source of hope,' for it indeed recognizes the primacy and sacredness of individual liberty and human dignity. I also allow that it may become 'the frustration of hope' simply because the fundamental value expressed by the Thesis is the value of individual sovereignty, "the unalienable right of individuals" which cannot be "made into a communal right,"[480] as Greenfeld`s puts it. Only in its 'individualistic' interpretation is this right meaningful. Therefore, the minority groups` right to sovereignty can only be meaningful as "the composite liberty of [a group`s] members."[481] Looking at the matter from this perspective, I therefore agree that group dissent and democratic protest might be indeed somewhat tanked by this fact, especially if this dissent steps outside the rhetoric of the Thesis and contradicts the 'common sense' that the latter presents. However, as has been argued, dissent in US America is rarely formulated in principles other than those of the dominant Thesis. Bercovitch therefore speaks of "a complicity of opposites"[482] within US culture which constantly absorbs dissent and factionalism into the system as defined by the Thesis. American protest is thus never *genuinely* (qualitatively) *radical*, for the voices of protest and oppression speak the same language (appeal to the same dominant narrative). They all follow the "exemplary American tradition of protest."[483] This therefore means that resistance in US America is predominately (if not always) *canonical* (conforming to the "canonical cultural pattern"[484]) and never *un*-American.

To repeat the point that I argue in this chapter, dissent in US America always appeals to the rhetoric of the dominant Thesis which nourishes the imagination of the US American nation and constitutes its identity. According to Bercovitch, US American dissent seems to be practiced in accordance with the following pattern: at first, dissent poses "a fundamental

[478] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 4.
[479] Patell, *Negative Liberties*, 22.
[480] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 480.
[481] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 480.
[482] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 9.
[483] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 19.
[484] Bruner, *Acts,* 50.

challenge to the system,"[485] later, however, this challenge comes to *reaffirm* the system. The system is thus opposed in ways that reaffirm its fundamental principles of organization. US America`s dissenters seek to make the national identity defined by the foundational Thesis "a trope of liberation:" they take "old symbols as vehicles of moral / political renovation," but the symbols "refigured thus demand for renovation" and "render freedom, opportunity, democracy, radicalism part of the American Way."[486] The symbols appropriated for dissent thereby repeat the narrative of the American self and thus 'celebrate' the nation, the American Way. Therefore, in my understanding, all dissenters (liberals and conservatives alike) practice *Americanness* (formulate their dissent in the language of the dominant narrative which they regard as the 'common sense' and 'the good'). As Bruner, himself an American, notes in reference to various 'factious phenomena,' what is of particular interest is how such moments of faction not only do not "separate us, but how much more often they are neutralized."[487] He ascribes this to the "astonishing narrative gift" of humans as "one of the principal forms of peacekeeping."[488] This point is in line of my conception of the US national identity as expressed in the Thesis and its attendant mythology as foremost a narrative / discursive identity. This matter will be discussed in the next section of the thesis.

Coming to America in the sixties, Bercovitch had the chance to observe this phenomenon of the assimilation of dissent by the Thesis against the backdrop of the 'turbulent' decade which he describes as being, in fact, 'not so turbulent.' According to Bercovitch, "[w]hat was lost in that endless debate about America, I realized, was the fact that the debate itself was part of a long ripened ritual of consensus."[489] According to the scholar, the protests did not address "the cultural limitations"[490] at the heart of the conflict. The conflict, which took the form of one group`s demand for the recognition of its status/sovereignty, was couched in the language that was the source of oppression, but also the promise of liberation (the Thesis as the 'source of hope' and 'the frustration' thereof). The conflict never called for the departure from Americanism, but for the return to its traditional / purer forms, "to a more faithful adherence to it,"[491] to remember Lieven`s words. The abridgment of an individual`s rights (the man grievance of the movement) was thus interpreted as departure from the canonical ('the ordinary / habitual'), that is, from the American Thesis.

[485] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 321.
[486] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 19.
[487] Bruner, *Acts*, 95.
[488] Bruner, *Acts*, 95.
[489] Bercovitch, *The Ritual*, 272.
[490] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 19.
[491] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 51.

According to Bercovitch, America as a symbolic field occasionally falls under the influence of "extrinsic sources" which are potentially disruptive and by that potentially *(trans)formative*. US America however manages to 'absorb and adapt' these influences "to its own distinctive patterns."[492] Therefore, in US America, antithetical radicalism has *a cultural function*: US liberalism (the Thesis) widely valorizes dissent/secession which is however to be eventually absorbed into the dominant *liberal* discourse. Therefore, it is, according to Bercovitch, a 'triumph of the Culture,' and, perhaps, a "tyranny of the culture"[493] (the triumph and tyranny of the American Thesis). The Culture/Thesis "found ways of harnessing revolution for its own purposes" (to re-establish the principles of the Thesis): what "tended toward subversion" came to re-affirm "persistent deeply conservative patterns of culture."[494]

Finally, I would also like to briefly mention yet another interesting aspect of the workings of the American Thesis within the social reality of the US nation. In *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America,* Frances Fox Piven studies how the subversion of political authority by popular protest initiates democratic reform in the US American nation. As Piven argues, there are moments in the national history when ordinary people rise together against what they perceive as injustice (in the case of US America, in my understanding, 'injustice' means the failure on the part of the governing authorities to observe the individual`s right to sovereignty / liberty). Popular drama thus draws attention to the issues which have hitherto been ignored by political leaders and the managers of the parties. Popular unrest works against electoral coalitions, and political authorities are forced to bridge these gaps in order to unite voters into majorities. Such dissent therefore works against the interests of the political (and business) elite who "in its drive to win a majority works to paper over or ignore fractious divisions that would make a voting majority unlikely."[495] Piven`s argument thus 'got me thinking' that the American Thesis might not only somewhat provoke antithetical dissent, but also foster dissent of its own making. From the very beginning, according to Greenfeld, US America`s "idealistic loyalty to" the values of "the absolute sovereignty, self-government, or independence of every individual"[496] and the exceptional degree to which these ideals were integrated into the nation`s identity had 'boded ill,' that is, carried a disruptive potential of considerable power (the nation`s innate propensity for

[492] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 20.
[493] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 44.
[494] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 20.
[495] Frances Fox Piven, *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, inc., 2008) 5.
[496] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 412.

"complete atomization and political anarchy"[497]). The Creed`s disruptive potential thus resides in US America`s most cherished ideal of individual sovereignty and status as the 'unalienable rights' of a human being and a national member. I therefore argue that the times of crisis and conflict in the history of US America are exactly those historical moments when certain segments of the US national people perceive that their right to sovereignty (guaranteed by the foundational Thesis) is abridged. At such moments, the US nation, as Bruner would have put it, "either does not agree on the meaning of what is canonical and what makes divergent, or the narratives it lives by become so ideologically or self-seemingly motivated that distrust replaces interpretation."[498] In other words, when the US national members perceive that there are inconsistencies between the ideals (the Thesis which guarantees one`s exercise of individual sovereignty) and reality (the actual application of the 'thetic' principles), they protest. As Bruner notes, when "input violates expectancy, […] the [whole] system is put on alert."[499] Robert Bellah, for example, refers to such moments of crisis as US America`s "times of trial"[500] – among those are the Founding, the Civil War, the 1960s with the decade`s pending issues of racial equality, the Vietnam War… and, I would say, *counting* (the reader might consider in this regard the crisis around Donald Trump`s election to presidency or the more recent Black Lives Matter movement). In my understanding, such 'moments of trial' are the times of some kind of 'narrative breakdown/wreckage,' when the existing discursive constructions of the common national identity and how much they correspond to the context of the day are called into question and *negotiated*. Such 'narrative wreckage' thus calls into question the very existence of the US American nation in its semantic (ideological) unity, but at the same time initiates the renegotiation of the meaning of the US nation. Given that the US nation is very much its liberal Thesis (at least ideologically), this renegotiation thus returns the nation to the practice of democracy and even promotes further democratic reform. This pattern is easily traceable in US America`s national history: as I dare argue, the great historical moments of "egalitarian reform"[501] were the nation`s response to the discrepancies between its identity (as defined by the Thesis) and the undemocratic tendencies of the day. Those were the moments when the US American people demanded renegotiation of what US America truly is. This (re)negotiation was made possible not least by virtue of the existence of the Thesis, the dominant narrative of the nation`s

[497] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 412.
[498] Bruner, *Acts*, 96.
[499] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 46.
[500] Robert Bellah, *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial* (New York: Seabury, 1975) 1.
[501] Piven, *Challenging Authority*, 16.

identity, its common sense, and value system, its "prolonged and intricate process […] of construction and negotiation deeply embedded in the culture."[502]

It must be noted that this kind of dissent is not antithetical, for, as it seems to me, it does not revolt against modernity as such. This protest is 'thetic:' not only does it appeal to the principles of the Thesis, but also ensures their realization in practice. In my assessment, the *success* of protest via the Thesis therefore only positively reinforces its postulates as the primary (and the only) frame of reference, indeed, as the *preferred* model. The American Thesis thus becomes the only valorized model of protest within the US American nation. If one wishes to be heard, one must speak in the language of the Creed (the mother tongue of US nationalism and its common sense). This observation only adds to the above argument by Bercovitch that any protest in US America comes to re-affirm the national narrative. However, unlike the disruptiveness of antithetical forces which tend to sabotage the practice of democracy, the disruptive potential of the Thesis makes the democratization of US society not only possible, but also quite constant: it sets off the process of (re)negotiation of common meanings, but ultimately returns this renegotiation to its most fundamental principles, the sovereignty and the value of individual life. This is perhaps what Hughes describes as US America`s "propensity for restoration"[503] (note how this seems to be always restoration to the narrative image of the national community as set by the American Thesis). Since its establishment as the dominant narrative, the American Thesis has driven such moments of turmoil: the Creed thus "by its very nature [contains] a stimulus for disaffection and revolt, for the more intense the commitment to the ideals, the more sensitive, the more intolerant, one [becomes] to the imperfections in their realization."[504] However, as 'a self-correcting mechanism,' the Thesis has also been instrumental in the successful resolution of such times of crisis and conflict, bringing the nation closer to its democratic ideal (returning the exceptional to the canonical).

To add one last point to the discussion of the catalytic properties of the Thesis, I would like to briefly return to the above argument by Patell who writes that the promises of 'US American individualism' (the Thesis) become the 'source of hope' as well as cause its frustration for the victims of 'group-oriented discrimination.' The Thesis, indeed, postulates the primacy of individual (not group) sovereignty, and "only in this sense [is] it meaningful,"[505] as

[502] Bruner, *Acts*, 25.
[503] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 109.
[504] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 412.
[505] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 480.

Greenfield puts it. In my opinion, this is, indeed, an interesting paradox within US national culture which deserves to be discussed in more detail. What I can add for my part is that, even with this paradox, US America remains a democratic state, and we see instances of democratic reform which I personally tend to ascribe to the workings of the Thesis. Even when professing the individualistic notions of liberty, the American Creed remains liberal at its core, that is, in its original version / interpretation, it simply cannot serve as a means of oppression. Following the above argument by Bercovitch, I believe that it is true, however, that the process of renegotiation initiated by the Thesis is rarely (never?) attempted beyond the semantic / ideological space (the rhetoric, ideas, values, narratives, metaphors, etc.) as circumscribed by the Thesis. Such renegotiation is thus never un-American. Moreover, it is not really about 'renegotiation' per se, as I tend to believe, rather about the 'reiteration' of the American Creed in the times of crisis, that is, when the nation seems to have departed from its original identity.

To conclude this chapter, the American Thesis thus "mediates between the canonical world of culture and the more idiosyncratic world of beliefs, desires, and hopes; [i]t renders the exceptional comprehensible and keeps the uncanny at bay […] reiterates the norms of the society without being didactic [and] provides a basis for rhetoric without [radical] confrontation."[506] The Creed is thus, in Lieven`s assessment, "a matter of necessity for the United States:" it proves to be "essential to preventing the country's immensely disparate and sometimes morally absolutist social, cultural, religious and ethnic groups from flying apart."[507] Greenfeld notes in this regard that US America`s commitment to the 'thetic' principles of liberty and equality "remains the main source of social cohesion and the main stimulant of unrest in it."[508] The order and entropy of the American Thesis both reside in "[t]he rigidity of loyalty to [its] national ideals, as well as its laxity, [that] endangers the nation; yet this loyalty preserves it."[509] However, as has been noted, the Thesis at the same time "exclude[s] alternatives to the dominant culture by limiting the opposition to terms which are intrinsic to the patterns of dominance."[510] The hegemon narrative of the US nation thus effectively returns the exceptional/divergent/uncanonical to the ordinary and canonical (and, by definition, the solely 'commonsensical' and 'morally good'). To quote Bourdieu,

[506] Bruner, *Acts*, 52.
[507] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 52.
[508] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 484.
[509] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 484.
[510] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 22.

"[c]ultural oppression is much more unconscious, and cultural alienation tends to exclude any awareness of alienation."[511]

However, what exactly makes the American Thesis so persuasive? What allows it to produce such a powerful emotive effect on the US nation? As I will attempt to demonstrate in the following chapter, at least part of its power the Thesis derives from a set of attendant myths (mythic narratives) which are "so deeply embedded as to operate beneath the level of most Americans` consciousness."[512] As Lieven remarks, these myths (mythic narratives), although "not, strictly speaking, part of the formal Thesis or Creed," "help give it much of its emotional force"[513] and account for much of its persuasiveness (ontologicity). Given that the Thesis constitutes US America`s national identity, these myths thus affirm the discursive construction of the US nation and legitimize its institutions and practices.

[511] Bourdieu, *Habitus and Field*, 137.
[512] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 52.
[513] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 52.

5. The Myths of US American Nationalism

As I have attempted to demonstrate in the previous chapters, the American Thesis as a complex of ideals and propositions constitutes US America`s national identity, the nation`s common sense (the ordinary / the canonical) and morality (the good). Another peculiar feature of the Thesis, as Lieven and Hughes note, is that it "draw[s] on a set of common myths."[514] In my assessment, these national / cultural myths can be described as somewhat 'satellite' myths: they as if orbit the American Thesis, exerting a considerable degree of gravitational influence upon it without ever attempting to collide with its principles. In this gravitational interaction, the Thesis and its attendant myths are thus mutually sustaining. As I argue in this chapter, US America`s national myths support (rationalize, legitimize, and ritualistically reenact) the Thesis. As the US nation`s identity, the Thesis as such is simply a set of ideas, while the specific configuration of cultural myths around the dominant Creed and in interaction with it, in my opinion, creates the *narrative* of the US as a nation.

The Thesis and its myths thus respond to what Anderson refers to as "the need for a narrative of 'identity'"[515] brought about by the structural constraints in the moment of the birth of nationalism as the phenomenon of modernity. As I attempted to demonstrate in the chapter on the extralinguistic context of the United States` national beginnings, the Creed (among other objectives) did in fact respond to the nascent nation`s need for such a 'narrative of identity.' As I will further argue, it is this narrativity (narrative form) of the US national identity that accounts for the ontological and affective power of the Thesis. As Lieven notes, the "mixture of the principles of the American Creed with a set of historical and cultural myths about the nation" is what ultimately makes US America`s 'civil religion' which "became the essential cultural underpinning of America's current version of civic nationalism."[516] The American Creed and its attendant myths thus support US America's 'peculiar brand of nationalism' which Lieven describes as to a large extent a "myth-based nationalism."[517] As Bercovitch admits, having "been living in the United States for a few years," the scholar "realized that [he] was living inside the myth of America,"[518] and

[514] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 52.
[515] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 205.
[516] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 55.
[517] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 57.
[518] Bercovitch, *The Ritual*, 271.

what Bercovitch eventually discovered was not simply the existence of some grand national myth as a kind of cultural superstructure, but "the day-by-day uses of myth."[519]

Therefore, before I proceed to discuss the specific myths of US nationalism, I would like to answer the following questions: What is the nature of myth? What is its role in the formation of nations? What accounts for its persuasiveness and affectivity? In his attempt to answer similar questions, Darren Kelsey approaches myth as 'a type of discourse' and 'a vehicle for ideology.' As discourse, myth thus represents a specific knowledge of social reality as well as "subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them."[520] Myth as discourse is able to "constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects [it] seek[s] to govern."[521] To study myth as a vehicle for ideology is, according to Kelsey, to study how "power relations […] construct discourses to serve particular ideological interests."[522] The reader might find it interesting how well the definition of ideology fits that of myth: like myth, ideology is "a system of cultural assumptions, or the discursive concatenation, the connectedness, of beliefs or values which uphold or oppose the social order, or which otherwise provide a coherent structure of thought that hides or silences the contradictory elements in social […] formations.[523] Myth is thus fashioned by discourse and carries ideology: "[d]iscourse constructs the story (myth) that carries the ideology, whilst ideology also informs the construction of discourse."[524] However, unlike myth, ideology alone, according to Kelsey, is not able to 'put the drama on stage.'[525] It is due to the affective qualities of myth that it is capable of fostering drama, inviting everyone to participate in it. Kelsey thus contends that it is the *affective dynamics* of myth that allow it to operate "beneath immediate levels of consciousness."[526] Lieven voices a similar conviction, noting that the myths attendant on the Thesis are "so deeply embedded as to operate beneath the level of most Americans` consciousness."[527] Myth stirs affect, and this affect is contagious. Affect is not the same as emotion, though: affective practices are "the discursive and psychological processes and interactions that both stir emotions and use

[519] Bercovitch, *The Ritual*, 272.
[520] Darren Kelsey, *Media and Affective Mythologies: Discourse, Archetypes and Ideology in Contemporary Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) 11.
[521] Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (2nd ed.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997) 109.
[522] Kelsey, *Media and Affective Mythologies*, 13.
[523] Julian Wolfreys, *Critical Keywords in Literary and Cultural Theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 101.
[524] Kelsey, *Media and Affective Mythologies*, 14.
[525] Kelsey, *Media and Affective Mythologies*, 14.
[526] Kelsey, *Media and Affective Mythologies*, 18.
[527] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 52.

emotions to communicate broader conceptual information, personal feelings, and social values."[528] However, what is it about myth that makes it so affectively powerful?

Following the above definition of myth as 'a type of discourse,' I therefore argue that myth (as any discourse) is "primarily narrative in structure."[529] Drawing on the work by major scholars of myth criticism (Barthes, Cassirer, etc.), Herfried Münkler identifies three principal dimensions of myth: its *narrativity* / narrative form (a myth tells a story), its rituality (the ritualistic re/iteration of a narrative, as I understand it), as well as its visuality and iconicity (the visual / iconic representations of a narrative in images and personas).[530] Of all the three dimensions of myth, it is precisely the narrative one that is, in my assessment, responsible for its affectivity. Therefore, as I understand it, it is the narrative quality / structure of the myths which sustain the American Thesis that makes the latter so emotionally and ontologically powerful (as has been demonstrated in the preceding chapter), simply because the narrative organization of meaning and experience is so organic to human thought.

In his introductory chapter to *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*, Theodore R. Sarbin draws the reader`s attention to the degree to which the narrative principle underlies human experience as well as guides human thought and action: as he remarks, "human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures [...] meanings are held together by the implicit or explicit use of plot."[531] As Crossley notes, "people bleed stories:"[532] our plans and memories, our fantasies and daydreams are *stories*; rituals of daily life – *stories*; our relationships with others – *stories*; others are interpreted as *stories*. Life seems to be driven by narrative plots. As Sarbin has it and as I attempted to demonstrate it in the chapter on the nation as a cultural community, the human world is a world of (cultural) meanings, and "survival in a world of meanings is problematic without the talent to make up and to interpret stories."[533] Following this argument, I therefore believe that it is through the narrative principle that social meaning is achieved. In my understanding, the 'drama' into which one is born trains one to 'perform' in a believable manner (to reach some kind of Stanislavsky`s 'believable truth'): as Sarbin notes, "the appropriateness, propriety, and convincingness of the actor's performance depends upon

[528] Kelsey, *Media and Affective Mythologies*, 16.
[529] Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary M. Gergen, "Narrative Form and the Construction of Psychological Science," in *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct*, ed. Theodore R. Sarbin (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1986) 31.
[530] Herfried Münkler, *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2009), qtd. in Paul, 28.
[531] Theodore R. Sarbin, "The Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Psychology," in *Narrative Psychology*, 8
[532] Crossley, *Introducing Narrative Psychology*, 27.
[533] Sarbin, *Narrative Psychology*, 11.

the degree of overlap of the stories imagined or enacted by other actors."[534] As Bruner notes, such stories, "once acted out, 'make' events and 'make' history [and] contribute to the reality of the participants"[535] in a respective social order.

What also links myth to narrative is the fact that the former functions like and on the basis of *language*, as Roland Barthes argues. According to Barthes, myth is a 'system of communication' and "a type of speech."[536] If I understand the philosopher correctly, myth as language is simultaneously a *system* (of communication), that is, a conceptual order – words, metaphors, images, etc. and the many combinations thereof, each producing its own specific meaning – as well as *speech*, that is, everything that can be said within this system; that which the system allows to say, or even to conceive of saying. Following this understanding of myth, I therefore conclude that the Thesis along with its attendant myths constitute the very language of US nationalism / the US national identity (its system of communication and speech). As the definition of the word 'language' implies, the language of US nationalism describes the world / communicates a specific image of social reality for the US nation (as well as the image of the nation itself). "The limits of my language," to quote Wittgenstein, thus "mean the limits of my world."[537] Indeed, as has been noted in the previous chapter on how the Creed tends to determine the very language in which protest in US America is conceived of and articulated, the limits of the Thesis indeed seem to 'mean the limits' of the Americans` world.

At this point, I would like to linger a bit over the specificities of narrative form and its functioning. In my opinion, the power of myth as being narrative in structure might be ascribed to the fact that there is indeed, as Bruner notes, "some human 'readiness' for narrative […] [some] predisposition to organize experience into a narrative form."[538] What are the properties of narrative form that make it so useful in the construction of meaning? To begin with, according to Kenneth and Mary Gergen, narrative is distinguished by "its ability to structure events in such a way that they demonstrate, first, a connectedness or coherence, and second, a sense of movement or direction through time."[539] In *Acts of Meaning*, Jerome Bruner argues that the principal property of narrative is indeed "its inherent sequentially:" "a narrative is composed of a unique sequence of events, mental states, happenings involving

[534] Sarbin, *Narrative Psychology*, 15.
[535] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 42.
[536] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 107.
[537] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 68.
[538] Bruner, *Acts*, 46.
[539] Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary M. Gergen, "Narrative Form and the Construction of Psychological Science," *Narrative Psychology*, 25.

human beings as characters or actors.[540] Following Bruner`s argument, I understand these 'events, mental states, and happenings' as facts of (objective as well as subjective) reality, and, as facts, these "constituents [of narrative] do not […] have a life or meaning of their own."[541] "Their meaning," as Bruner continues, is thus "given by their place in the overall configuration of the sequence as a whole."[542] Following this argument, I therefore conclude that meanings arise from the establishment of relations or connections between the facts of extralinguistic reality. Individual facts might not be related to one another in any meaningful way outside a narrative and might not have the meaning they acquire once these facts are organized temporally into sequences (that is, into a narrative). As Bruner notes, for experience to become meaningful, facts thus must be 'strung' into a story via *emplotment*, that is, by means of *the plot* or fabula. Through the plot structure, human predicaments are made sense of and their resolutions are attempted. The human mind seems to be as if pre-wired to seek and see causality even there where no such connection can be established.[543]

A second feature of narrative is, according to Bruner, its "indifference to extralinguistic [factual] reality," that is, narrative "can be 'real' or 'imaginary' without loss of its power as a story."[544] It is again "the sequence of [a story`s] sentences, rather than the truth or falsity of any of those sentences" that determines the "overall configuration or plot"[545] of a story. As Bruner also states, another important criterion for a narrative to appear 'true' is its *lifelikeness*,[546] and I tend to interpret this 'lifelikeness' as in fact the degree to which a particular narrative corresponds to a community`s specific habitus (or its dominant discourse, for, as has been noted, discourses fashion myths). I would also like to draw the reader`s attention to how Bruner`s standard of 'lifelikeness' seems quite reminiscent of Barthes`s observation that myth "transforms history into nature,"[547] supplying 'self-evident truths' and establishing artificial causality. Moreover, as Bruner remarks, actual facts organized into a narrative themselves turn into somewhat a trope: they come to "resist logical procedures for establishing what they mean," or for "arriving logically at their 'truth conditions.'"[548] Within a narrative, facts thus poorly lend themselves to logical analysis, only to interpretation. To draw a parallel, it is quite interesting how this observation echoes the argument by such

[540] Bruner, *Acts*, 43.
[541] Bruner, *Acts*, 43.
[542] Bruner, *Acts*, 43.
[543] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 17. & Sarbin, *Narrative Psychology*, 12-14.
[544] Bruner, *Acts*, 44.
[545] Bruner, *Acts*, 44.
[546] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 11.
[547] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, 107.
[548] Bruner, *Acts*, 60.

scholars as Blumenberg, Wallace, Flood, Jameson, Pease, etc. who note that myth is largely unresponsive to rational explication and ideological critique.[549] As Hayden White writes: "The process of fusing events […] into a totality capable of serving as the object of representation is a poetic one. […] These fragments have to be put together to make a whole […] and they are put together in the same way that novelists put together figments of their imaginations to display an ordered world […]". Facts therefore *"*do not speak for themselves, but […] the historian speaks on their behalf, and fashions the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity is in its representation – a purely discursive one."[550] Another interesting point to be added to the above argument is that the sequentiality and lifelikeness of narrative might also account for its dramatism (dramatic quality). As Kenneth and Mary Gergen note, narrative is distinguished by its "capacity to create the feelings of drama and emotion,"[551] that is, dramatic engagement: "segmented events in themselves appear limited in their capacity to sustain engagement. […] It is the relationship among events, not the events themselves, that seems chiefly responsible for sustaining dramatic engagement, and a theory of narrative form is essentially concerned with such relationships."[552]

Another crucial feature of narrative is, according to Bruner, its ability to reconcile *the ordinary/the usual* with all sorts of departure from this canonicality, that is, *'the exceptional:'* by 'forging links' between the exceptional and the ordinary, narrative makes exceptionality more 'digestible' for comprehension (that is, 'meaningful'), thereby neutralizing the potential for conflict and contradiction. When the ordinary/routine organization of reality is disrupted, the need arises to make sense of the breach: to explicate, rationalize, find reasons, to explain the deviation by bringing it to conform to "a canonical cultural pattern."[553] As Bruner remarks, "lifelike narratives start with a canonical or 'legitimate' steady state, which is breached, resulting in a crisis, which is terminated by a redress, with recurrence of the cycle an open possibility."[554] As Crossley notes, "always in emergencies we invent narratives,"[555] and I tend to interpret the word 'emergency' here as in fact the disruption of the canonical organization of experience by the exceptional. The preceding discussion of how the American Thesis assimilates otherness into sameness as well as the analysis of the structural constraints in which the architects of the US nation found themselves around the Revolutionary moment

[549] Paul, *The Myths That Made America*, 29.
[550] Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) 124.
[551] Kenneth and Mary Gergen, "Narrative Form and the Construction of Psychological Science," 28.
[552] Kenneth J. and Mary M. Gergen, "Narrative Form and the Construction of Psychological Science," 28.
[553] Bruner, *Acts,* 50.
[554] Bruner, *Actual Minds*, 16.
[555] Crossley, *Introducing Narrative Psychology*, 45.

('status anomie' and 'identity crisis') and their subsequent attempt to create a 'story of US America,' might well illustrate this point. The restoration to the canonical version of reality is thus attempted in accordance with what constitutes this canonicality, "the predominant narratives, inscribed goals and moralities intrinsic to [a community`s] culture"[556] (cultural constraints or habitus).

Finally, the last characteristic feature of narrative is its unique way of *using language* for creating/communicating meaning. As Bruner notes, this end comes to be achieved chiefly by the employment of *tropes*. Wodak, for example, observes how, especially in national narratives, metonymy "may conceal responsible agents or move them to the background," while personification might attribute "a human form to an abstract entity"[557] (for example, Columbia, symbolic of the US nation, moving to the dark-skied West, personifying America`s Manifest Destiny; or God to whom/which human intentionality was effectively attributed by the anthropomorphic turn of the architects of the American Revolution`s thought).

Having outlined the nature of myth, I therefore proceed to briefly address the most fundamental myths of US nationalism which affirm the American Thesis as the nation's identity and give it the emotional force and the ontological status that distinguish the Creed. Synergizing with the Thesis, the myths of the United States' *chosenness*, *naturalness*, and *messianism/millennialism* thus articulate the narrative of the US nation's identity and form the ideological/semantic basis of US America`s nationalism.

5.1 The Narrative of Chosenness

> The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples […] to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord […] set his affection on you and [chose] you […] because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he […] with his mighty hand […] redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Deut. 7:6-8, NIV)

These words from the Hebrew Bible (the book of Deuteronomy) express the idea of *chosenness* which travelled through the ages from ancient Israel to England and then to its American possessions whose soil was fertile enough for such a self-image to take root and

[556] Crossley, *Introducing Narrative Psychology*, 42.
[557] Wodak, *The Discursive Construction*, 43.

eventually blossom. As has been noted, the *unique status* of a national community was built into the very idea of the nation, but each nation seemed to validate its uniqueness in its own way, drawing this uniqueness from different sources. According to Greenfeld, the notion of chosenness or uniqueness inheres in the very idea of the nation: "national identity tends to be associated and confounded with a community`s sense of uniqueness and the qualities contributing to it."[558] The uniqueness of the world`s first nation, the English nation, was not only guaranteed by its status as a polity, as Greenfeld believes, but, as Hughes notes, was also justified by the Biblical rhetoric and imagery of a chosen people.[559] The very idea of the chosen nation was an idea from the Scripture. It was therefore the religious sentiment of the English nation that ultimately became the basis of US America`s national uniqueness. As Greenfeld puts it, "because of the association between the Reformation and English national identity, Protestantism not only provided the yet voiceless nationalism with a language, but also secured it a sanctuary and protection, which it needed in order to mature."[560] According to Hughes, the *uniqueness* (the status of being the chosen one) so generously granted to the ancient Jews was centuries later effectively 'appropriated' by the resourceful Americans for themselves and for the land that they similarly appropriated as their new home, an 'uninhabited' earthly paradise, as they saw it, where the new history of humankind would be made.[561] Although, in time, the language of chosenness lost in the intensity of its deeply religious character, its central message remained intact: as Hughes argues, US America was imagined as a messiah entrusted by the Higher Being with a righteous mission to convert the supposedly heathen world into the religion of democracy and initiate it into the revelations of the virtues of freedom and self-government (basically into the Thesis, I might add). Hughes therefore identifies the Myth of the Chosen Nation as one of "the most powerful and persistent of all the myths that Americans invoke about themselves."[562] He defines this myth as "the notion that God Almighty chose the United States for a special mission in the world."[563] Among the most fundamental elements of this myth, in Hughes`s opinion, are religion (the Judeo-Christian heritage) and 'blood' (Anglo-Saxon blood), or belief in "the Anglo-Saxon [innate] capacity for morality and free institutions."[564] This latter 'Anglo-Saxon' component, in my opinion, only further attests to the degree to which the US national identity is indebted to the principles of English nationalism.

[558] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 8.
[559] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By,* 34.
[560] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 63.
[561] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By,* 39-44.
[562] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By,* 32.
[563] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By,* 1.
[564] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By,* 21.

In the case of the US American nation, Hughes (like Greenfeld) indeed traces the origins of this powerful cultural narrative to the 'birthmother' of US nationalism, that is, to England and the English Reformation, and especially to the historical figure of William Tyndale who was most instrumental in "populariz[ing] the notion that England stood in a covenant relationship with God."[565] As Hughes outlines the history of the idea, in 1519, William Tyndale, upon translating the Pentateuch, or the five books of Moses, into the English language, comes across a theme that particularly resonates with him: God's covenant with Israel in which the former promises to pour the many blessings on the Israelites, treat them as 'his treasured possession,' on condition that they follow His divine law.[566] So powerful was the effect of this biblical imagery on Tyndale that in the preface to the second edition of his initially rejected translation of the New Testament, he brings the concept of the covenant to the forefront as the central theme of the Scripture. Despite the anti-Puritan sentiments at the time, the publication did not meet significant resistance, largely due to the fact that Henry VIII was deeply involved in his matrimonial problems.[567] Tyndale`s commentary became unexpectedly popular with the English public: it enjoyed numerous print runs, while the combustible popular imagination had been ignited with the idea of the national covenant. Tyndale does not limit the possibility of contractual relationship with God to ancient Israel, but allows that God can conclude a similar agreement with England, if it proves itself willing to abide by His commandments. Although Tyndale did not directly refer to the English folk as the God-chosen nation, the concept of the national covenant allowed this definition by default: if the Lord had 'chosen [the Israelites] out of all the peoples on the face on the earth' to enter into a covenant with, it was exactly because they were *exceptional*.[568]

According to Hughes, this language was eagerly picked up by the most ardent practitioners of English nationalism (as Greenfeld described them[569]) as well as the most ardent adherents to the Bible and God`s word – the Puritans. Having suffered many traumas and humiliations (which only strengthened their adherence to the principles of the English national idea), the Puritans, according to Hughes, managed to launch a full-scale revolution, "one of words and propaganda:"[570] they occupied leading positions in the country's major educational institutions, planting their ideas in the circles of prospective clerics, and devoted themselves

[565] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By,* 33.
[566] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 34.
[567] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 35.
[568] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 35-36.
[569] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 72.
[570] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By,* 32.

to the publication of books and pamphlets, agitating in every possible way for their cause.[571] It must reminded, though, that their cause was decidedly nationalist: as Greenfeld notes, on the surface, the Puritans demanded only spiritual reform, but many in England understood that Puritanism carried a powerful reformatory potential of the society as a whole: "Puritanism opened wide the gates for the reform of society in general, and implied nothing less than the destruction of the established order."[572]

As Hughes continues, despite the efforts, the Puritans were constantly confronted with the futility of their tactics, and eventually ended up thoroughly discouraged. Elizabeth I, although sticking to the middle way in dealing with the Catholics on the one hand and the Puritans on the other, for the most part ignored the demands of both, which drove the latter (and perhaps the former, too) into an even greater frustration. Exhausted, some Puritans attributed their lack of success to a tactical mistake: it was now obvious that, from the very beginning, the attempts to restore the first Christian church *in England* were doomed to failure.[573] The establishment of a truly Christian (and I might add, nationalist) community based on God's word (and the original ideals of English nationalism), as they believed, was possible only on condition that it be separated from the suffocating environment of England and its institutionally sited religious authorities. Religion was often evoked by the Puritans to justify their ideological claims which were deeply *nationalist*.[574] It was indeed their "inability to be English in England,"[575] as Greenfeld notes, that drove the groups of Englishmen and Englishwomen across the ocean. According to Greenfeld, the religiosity of Puritanism only aided in the promotion of the movement, formulation of its ideology and contributed to its self-representation. References to religion most convincingly legitimized the Puritans` *unprecedented reformist claims* which logically followed from the very definition of England as a nation. Social change was therefore demanded in the locution of God`s will, and the position of England as a God-chosen nation.

As Hughes further argues, with the faith in the possibility of implementing biblical and national ideals in England lost, the Puritans continued to ground their experience of New England in the idea of the covenant.[576] However, in the colonies, the covenant metaphor was increasingly interpreted as alluding to the notion of *chosenness*, and what was perhaps only

[571] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By,* 38-39.
[572] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 72-73.
[573] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 38.
[574] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 73.
[575] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 71.
[576] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By,* 39.

assumed in the logic of the biblical covenant with ancient Israel became even more accentuated. In my opinion, what is interesting in light of the previous discussion of the essentially negative understanding of individual liberty as outlined in the Thesis is that the notion of 'covenant' was initially collectivistic before it was 'individualized' by the Puritans. In my assessment, it was this individualistic understanding of individual liberty that the American Thesis inherited. However, as Hughes notes, not yet having reached the shores of the New World, the idea was famously articulated by John Winthrop in the sermon delivered aboard *Arabella*, and in at least one key respect bore little resemblance to the definition it acquired upon the arrival in America. What the metaphor of the covenant meant for Winthrop was *solidarity* or, in his words, "brotherly affection," as he encouraged his fellow men: "we must be knit together […] as one man, we must entertain each other in brotherly affection, […] we must delight in each other, make others` condition our own."[577] Hughes identifies several reasons for this semantic change.[578] First, the New England Puritans perceived themselves to be in the vanguard of religious liberty (and not only religious), as true revolutionaries who did not settle for mere reform, but managed to erect in the New World some semblance of the first/primitive Christian church as revealed in the Scripture. Secondly, the 'saints,' as they referred to one another, found themselves in the objective geographical as well as subjective psychological/spiritual isolation. Not only were there the waters of the Atlantic Ocean separating the Puritans from Europe, but also an abyss of incomprehension and alienation. They were progressively seeing themselves as misunderstood and abandoned, one-on-one in the covenant with God. These objective and subjective circumstances only strengthened the temptation to self-fashion as a community of the chosen. Their conviction in being the ideal members of the English nation ("better English than the English,"[579] as Greenfeld notes) who strictly abided by the principles of its nationalism (something that England "tired of the revolutionary striving to attain [its own] ideal"[580] was no longer able to do) only added to the Puritan sense of *chosenness*.

As Hughes contends, so symbolically potent was the example of the Puritans that the narrative of *chosenness* was slowly seeping into the collective (sub)conscious of the future US American nation. According to the scholar, "the Myth of the Chosen Nation [was] central

[577] John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," in Conrad Cherry, ed., *God`s New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 40, qtd. in Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 41.
[578] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 41.
[579] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 409.
[580] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 401.

even to the thinking of the American Founders,"[581] for "[i]mages of the children of Israel and of America as a chosen people likewise informed the rhetoric of the Revolution."[582] Indeed, when commissioned to design a seal for the United States, the committee members appointed by Congress offered their own visions of what should be communicated about the United States of America among which was the image of the children of Israel guided by 'a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.'[583] From Hughes`s analysis of the historical evidence of the period, it becomes clear that the political and intellectual elites of the day were indeed eager to establish genealogy between contemporary US America and ancient Israel (something that England once did). In his novel *White Jacket*, Herman Melville, for example, describes the US American nation as "the peculiar, chosen people – the Israel of our time, [whom] God has predestined [to be] the pioneers of the world; the advance-guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a new path in the New World that is ours." Long enough, says Melville, have the Americans been skeptical of themselves and their mission, but not anymore, for "the political Messiah had come, [and he had come] in *us*."[584]

Therefore, I might conclude that the language of *chosenness,* which inhered in the original national idea and which was only strengthened by the rhetorical appeals to the Bible, is deeply woven into the fabric of the US American national narrative: its national identity, cultural practices, and iconography. In my understanding, the language of *chosenness* sustains the narrative of the US American national identity as outlined in the principles of the American Thesis. Certainly, the idea of *chosenness* underlies the American Thesis as the legacy of the American Way. Indeed, by the late eighteenth century, the sense of occupying a privileged position was so firmly embedded in the minds of the Young Republic that it simply became a 'self-evident truth.'

5.2 The Narrative of Naturalness and Self-evidence

The *United States Declaration of Independence* postulates:

> When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the

[581] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 47.
[582] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 47.
[583] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 47.
[584] Herman Melville, *White Jacket, or, the World on a Man-of-War*, The Project Gutenberg EBook, produced by Geoff Palmer, HTML version by Al Haines, release: 2004, posting: 2010.

> powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature`s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.
>
> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.
>
> [...], with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence [...].[585]

In my understanding, these words quite laconically not only articulate the contents of the American Thesis, but also present the myths that accompany the Creed. As perhaps the first statement of the US national identity, these lines testify to the fact that the ideal of individual sovereignty was indeed the ideological nucleus of the former colonists` and, most importantly, the colonial political and intellectual elites` worldview (indeed, their very habitus). Another important feature of the above excerpt is, in my opinion, that the Thirteen Colonies` claim to independence (indeed, to the right of sovereignty) is couched in the natural language that, as will be demonstrated, the colonies ironically enough inherited from England itself (which they were now divorcing). As the first statement of the US American nation`s identity, these lines illustrate how the nascent Americans conceived of themselves as, in Hughes`s assessment, Nature`s Nation. These words thus speak of US America`s conviction that its ideals and institutions were "not spun out of someone's imagination or contrived by human wit,"[586] but are "rooted in the natural order, that is, in God's own intentions first revealed at the dawn of creation."[587] According to Hughes, the Myth of Nature`s Nation that emerged in full force in the Revolutionary period "had its deepest roots in the European Enlightenment, especially in Britain."[588] The narrative of naturalness however made it appear as if "American identity derived not from British history and culture […] but from nature, formed directly by the Creator."[589] At the same time, to further illustrate the intricate interaction of the Thesis and its attendant myths, the language of self-evidence, which inhered in the conception of US America as Nature`s Nation, derived its legitimacy from the principles of the nation`s Creed: as Hughes notes, the American Thesis proclaimed that "there

[585] "Declaration of Independence: A Transcription," *National Archives*, accessed 14 Feb 2020. https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript.
[586] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 70.
[587] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 2.
[588] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 61.
[589] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 70.

are certain truths that are simply 'self-evident' and require no formal proof,"[590] while the self-evidence of these truths was justified by the fact that "they are rooted in 'Nature and Nature's God' and therefore reflect the way things are meant to be."[591] If 'in the beginning was the Word,' I dare conclude, the word was with US America, and the word was US America (its specific identity and institutional organization). The narrative of naturalness and self-evidence allowed US Americans to imagine their nation as indeed Nature`s Nation. Thomas Paine, for example, asserted in *The Rights of Man* that "the case and circumstances of America present themselves as in the beginning of a world;"[592] while John Adams adds, for his part, that "the United States of America have exhibited, perhaps, the first example of governments erected on the simple principles of nature."[593]

As I argue in this thesis, heir to the English national identity, US America traces its national beginnings to the nationalism of England in quite a lot of key respects. According to Hughes, the US American nation`s language of naturalness is no exception in this regard. Following Hughes`s analysis of the origins of US America`s national myth of Nature`s Nation, we once again follow the genealogy of the natural language to eighteenth-century England during the Age of Enlightenment.[594] In 1624, Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Anglo-Welsh diplomat, historian, and religious philosopher, was growing appalled at the bloody religious crisis in the seventeenth-century Europe. This crisis, as he thought, was caused by the fact that the Bible, whose interpretation used to be the prerogative of the Catholic Church, had now been translated by such spiritual figures as Luther and Tyndale into the languages native to Europe`s Christians and thus became open to numerous rivalling interpretations.[595] To put an end to religious wars in Europe, Herbert had to come up with a solution that would appeal to the 'truths' (agreeable to rational thinking), on which all representatives of the most diverse religious affiliations would reach a consensus, and which would therefore bring together the conflicting sects. According to Hughes, in his book *De Veritate* (*On Truth*), Herbert argues the existence of two books authored by God: the Bible and *the Book of Nature*, that is, of the natural world.[596] Whereas the former is, according to Herbert, an infinitely complex scripture, the latter book is universal and relatively simple, containing self-evident truths that all

[590] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 78.
[591] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 79.
[592] Thomas Paine, *Complete Works of Thomas Paine* (Hastings: Delphi Classics, 2018) 224, E-Book.
[593] John Adams, *A Defense of the Constitutions of the Government of the United States of America*, abridged in *The Political Writings of John Adams: Representative Selections*, ed. George A. Peek (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1954), 117, qtd. in Hughes, 70.
[594] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 61-62.
[595] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 62.
[596] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 63.

religions recognize and follow. One such truth was, for example, that nature taught the existence of God through the perfect clockwork-like functioning of the natural world.[597] Herbert therefore appealed to the public to adhere to the Book of Nature, placing it higher than the Bible and (to an extent) replacing the Bible with it. Such a tactic effectively deprived any conflict on religious grounds of its theological rationale. According to Hughes, in his attempts to reconcile the Christians of Europe, Herbert was foremost a pragmatist rather than a theologian; his objective was to "reduce religion to a set of self-evident essentials upon which all reasonable human beings could agree."[598] Herbert grounded his conception of religious faith in *nature* and *reason*, and thus made his contribution to the birth and establishment of the English Enlightenment and English Deism.

Continuing his analysis, Hughes notes that the eighteenth-century Enlightenment thought relied on the possibility of empirical study of the world through the judgments of reason and the evidence of the senses.[599] Deism and the English Deistic tradition were a particular mode of thinking about God/deity that adopted the methodology, so to say, of the Enlightenment view of the world. Deism departs from the ideas about a 'Triune God' and truths revealed in mysterious visions from above (and *beyond* human reason) in favor of an even greater 'monotheism' – the conception of an indivisible deity, a supreme clock-maker, as well as the truths found in nature and understood / studied by the rational mind. As regards the Enlightenment backgrounds to US nationalism, Greenfeld remarks that the discourse of naturalness might have existed even prior to Herbert`s project of peacemaking of which Hughes speaks. "Since Bacon," science, which postulated the primacy of nature as the teacher of the world`s 'truths' / laws, was, as Greenfeld states, "viewed as a sign of [the English] nation`s greatness, the foundation and guarantee of its strength and virtue."[600] According to Greenfeld, "[b]ecause of its association with English nationalism – science became a cult object long before it could demonstrate its potential."[601]

In Hughes`s observation, Herbert's strategy is easily traceable in the *Declaration*. Indeed, as Hughes notes, it is known today that, while drafting the document, Jefferson addressed the works by Herbert and other Deistic thinkers.[602] For example, the *Declaration* acknowledges the existence of a particular type of deity – *Nature*`s God – who created all men equal and

[597] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 62.
[598] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 63.
[599] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 63.
[600] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 79.
[601] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 86.
[602] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 67.

endowed them with unalienable rights. The document also posits the existence of a body of unwritten moral givens ('we hold these Truths' – the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – 'to be self-evident'). However, as Hughes remarks, the image of a universal individual ('man in general') of which the *Declaration* speaks was a mere projection of the architects` own image of themselves. In my understanding, the founders fell prey to the attributional bias: in extolling the image of 'homo naturalis' (Nature`s man), they in fact extolled the image of 'homo europaeus' (European man), that is, the image of themselves, the Enlightenment man of reason, standardized in US America within the coordinate system of white (upper-class) manhood.[603] In my opinion, this might be illustrated by the historical fact that the *Declaration*`s liberatory message turned out to be a contradiction in terms (at best) when applied to lived reality, for the discrepancies between the ideals outlined in the text and their actual realization in reality were striking. This peculiarity in US national history is what Edmund Morgan notices when he remarks that "the simultaneous development of slavery and freedom is the central paradox of American history."[604]

In my understanding, the architects` attributional bias might serve as an example of the amount of power that habitus or 'cultural constraints' (in Greenfeld`s terminology) of which I spoke in the introductory chapters has over those who grew up in that particular cultural environment. To paraphrase the Peripatetic axiom which states that 'nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses,' we might say that there is nothing in the intellect that was not first in one`s respective cultural environment which inevitably shapes one`s worldview. And such was the eighteenth-century climate of opinion, which postulated that "whatever question you seek to answer, nature is the test, the standard: the ideas, the customs, the institutions of men, if ever they are to attain perfection, must obviously be in accord with those laws which 'nature reveals at all times, to all men.'"[605] As Hughes believes, the architects "absolutized their very particular cultural traditions and then heralded those traditions as both natural and universal."[606] The point of arrival was therefore identical to the point of departure.

Therefore, I might conclude, the language of naturalness inherited by US America from England just as naturally legitimized the narrative construction of the US nation as Nature`s Nation: first, the language of natural rights and self-evidence allowed the Thirteen Colonies to

[603] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 73.
[604] Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1965), qtd. in Paul, *The Myths That Made America*, 201.
[605] Carl L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964) 52-53.
[606] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 72.

formulate their claim for independence in a 'believable' manner (as has been noted, 'believability' in a cultural community is achieved via reference to its respective habitus which constitutes the community`s common sense and 'the good'); in the following decades, the language of naturalness was effectively made use of to construct, consolidate, and valorize the narrative of US America`s national identity. God`s chosen nation, US America emanated the natural order of things and thus felt entitled to spread its word of democracy and self-government to the rest of the world.

5.3 The Narrative of Messianism/Millennialism

In his "Introduction: What, then, is the American?", Christopher Bigsby remarks:

> America has so successfully colonized the future that it has mastered the art of prospective nostalgia. Its natural tense is the future perfect. It looks forward to a time when something will have happened. It is a place, too, where fact and fiction, myth and reality dance a curious gavotte. It is a society born out of its own imaginings.[607]

In my understanding, it would not be a mistake to interpret Bigsby`s observation that 'prospectively nostalgic' US America, having 'successfully colonized the future,' now lives in the future perfect tense as, in fact, alluding to what Hughes calls the US nation`s Myth of the Millennial Nation or "the notion that the United States, [as Nature`s Nation,] building on [the] natural order [it embodies], will usher in a final golden age for all humankind."[608] As Hughes notes, unlike the myth of Nature`s Nation which emerged as the dominant narrative in the Revolutionary period, the origins of the narrative of US America`s millennialism can be traced to the early national period, when it suddenly dawned on the United States that, as the chosen nation whose national spirit and social organization as if emulated the virtues of a golden age at the beginning of time, it was entrusted with the mission to "illumine the globe with truth, justice, goodness, and democratic self-government and […] thereby usher in a final golden age for all humankind."[609] According to Hughes, with one foot in the pastoral age at the dawn of creation, US America (due to its millennial vision) could effectively bracket the other end of the historical continuum.[610] If I may draw an analogy, this way of thinking

[607] Christopher Bigsby, "Introduction: What, then, is the American?," *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Culture,* ed. Christopher Bigsby (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 1.
[608] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 2.
[609] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 131.
[610] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 131.

depicted US America as a somewhat Janus-faced nation, simultaneously looking backward toward the 'dawn of creation' and forward toward to its 'dusk.'

To follow Hughes`s outline of the historical background to the millennial vison, the US nation`s millennial fantasy, according to the scholar, has its deepest roots in the ancient world and draws on the apocalyptic visions of Judaism and Christianity as well as the figure of the anticipated savor or messiah within whose power it is to save the world from its many afflictions.[611] When the first coming of Jesus Christ did not entail any (earthly) salvation of humanity (ancient Christians continued to be persecuted), this contradiction was interpreted as the postponement of the golden age of justice and peace which was now to be realized at the Second Coming of the Messiah: Jesus would rule over the world, Satan would be locked for the period of one thousand years ('millennium' from the Latin *mille*, thousand, and *annus*, year), and would not be able to sow discord among peoples. In the meantime, Christians had no choice but to wait for this golden age, 'bearing their crosses' obediently and enduring the worst of life's hardships. However, as Hughes notes, in the eighteenth century, something changed. The Enlightenment thought had greatly contributed to the fact that man (in possession of reason) and the science that studied him/her removed God from the center of the universe.[612] The numerous discoveries in the medical field (which made it possible to treat hitherto lethal diseases) as well as the advancement of the ideas of natural rights, individual freedom and humans` equality under the law made it easy to imagine man taking control of his/her fate, and even accelerating the approach of the golden age. The intervention of a deity was no longer necessary. In this eighteenth-century *post*millennial vision, the Second Coming was no longer that big of an issue.

In the context of the United States` national development, it was, according to Hughes, especially easy to imagine US America as the land of the millennium, for the Revolutionary moment and the birth of the nation virtually cemented the millennial vision for years ahead: everything was revolutionary about US America – the 'audacity' of the act and the radically democratic rights and freedoms on which the new nation was to be built.[613] The former colonies at that time had every reason to see this historic event as the beginning of the age of justice and liberty. As Hughes continues, during the Revolutionary period, an important shift in the millennial thinking occurred. If at the beginning it was God that first chose ancient Israel by His inscrutable will and then extended His blessing to New England, a century later,

[611] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 131-132.
[612] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 133.
[613] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 138.

it was the US American people (self-endowed with certain unalienable rights) who *chose God* ('appropriated' Him to justify their cause), and in whose hands was now the advancement of the golden age of the future. Hughes describes this shift in thinking as "[t]he transition from the sovereignty of God to the sovereignty of the people."[614] In my understanding, given the centrality of the ideal of individual sovereignty to the US American national self, it was perhaps only a matter of time before the nation shook off any authority from above and imagined itself as its own God. In Hughes`s opinion, as the US nation matured, the US millennial vision found its most vocal expression in US America`s westward expansion (the mythologization of the West as the space of unlimited opportunity and genuine Americanness and the doctrine of Manifest Destiny), its more recent economic expansion (the growth of the US market, the new economic Frontier, discussed in the language of messianism), as well as the cultural myth of the American Dream (the messianic vision was internalized by the cultural hero of the self-made man who, in their struggle for material prosperity, became their own frontier[615]).

As regards US America`s sense of mission, Lieven notes that it is the US nation`s "intense identification" with the American Creed and its attendant myths that "feeds American national messianism, a belief in the nation's duty to save the world."[616] US messianism thus inheres in the combination of the American Thesis and the US American national myths. In my opinion, Hughes shares a similar conviction to that of Lieven as he states that the US millennial vision is the product of the synergistic interaction of the nation`s most fundamental myths. Hughes therefore believes that "the myths of America as Chosen Nation, Nature's Nation, and Christian Nation gave to the millennial vision whatever content it had."[617] If we remember the specific contents of the narratives of chosenness and naturalness (self-evidence), we might clearly see how much the messianic language of US nationalism relies on these mythic discourses as well as how much the three narratives are interrelated and mutually supportive. According to Hughes, these narratives are all "equally ahistorical."[618] The position of the US American nation is quite unique as it stands untainted, or as Lieven puts it**,** "spared"[619] by human history, or, in Paine`s words, "unmutilated by […] the errors of tradition."[620] As Hughes believes, historical time cannot adequately measure US America, for

[614] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 142.
[615] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 159.
[616] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 63.
[617] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 161.
[618] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 130.
[619] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 28.
[620] Paine, *Complete Works*, 224.

its identity is clearly rooted in a golden age of the past (in the natural order of things) and a golden age that is yet to come (the millennium).[621] In my understanding, an element of ahistoricism was inherent already in the first statements of US nationhood. The necessity (not mere preference or desire) of which the first lines of the *Declaration* speak ('when in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary') is similarly ahistorical, for the 'Course of human events' does not seem to imply any historical necessity, rather that "there is a general course of nature in human action as well as in the operation of the sun and the climate."[622] Since its birth as a nation, US America as Nature`s Nation has stood outside human history and followed its own (natural) course of development. As Hughes continues, the second characteristic that the narratives of naturalness and millennialism have in common is the degree to which they complement each other by standing on either side of human history and at the same time *above* it[623]: as has been noted, if the natural language grounds US America`s beginnings in the great age at the dawn of creation, then the millennial language fashions US America as the ultimate endpoint of human history. Both mythic narratives therefore flank the United States` experience by rooting American ideals and values (the Thesis) in primordial *nature* ('Laws of Nature and Nature`s God'), while at the same time entitling the nation (by virtue of its *chosenness*) to secure the final victory in the apocalyptic battle of good (the American way, I would add) versus evil.

In light of the above discussion of the nature of US nationalism, I would also like to draw the reader`s attention to how much US American millennialism seems to be the logical extension of the nation`s tradition of self-government as well as other principles inherited from English nationalism. In my assessment, US America`s desire for expansion whether in time, geography, or market might be interpreted as motivated by the nation`s loyalty to the sacred right to exercise its sovereignty (as postulated in the Thesis). It is simply a *natural* right of the *chosen* nation. This, in my opinion, aptly demonstrates the interplay of the Thesis and its 'satellite' myths, to which Lieven attributes the United States` sense of mission.

In his analysis of the Myth of the Millennial Nation, Hughes adduces ample historical evidence of the fact that the millennial vision has indeed possessed the US national consciousness. As Hughes notes, even before the Revolutionary moment, such patriarchs as, for example, John Adams already defined the mission of US America (Adams speaks of the

[621] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 139.
[622] Garry Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002) 94.
[623] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 131.

settlement of America) in the language of millennialism as "the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth."[624] After the Revolution, this light/darkness trope had been actively exploited in the talks about the position of US America vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Ezra Stiles, president of Yale, for instance, preached in 1783 that US America was to "illuminate the world with TRUTH and LIBERTY […], [for] [l]ight spreads from the day spring in the west; and may it shine more and more until the perfect day."[625] Almost fifty years later, in the 1830s, Lyman Beecher, prominent Presbyterian minister, voiced his belief in US America`s providential mission to "throw its beams beyond the waves, [and] shine into darkness" so that "earth`s debased millions […] leap from the dust, and shake off their chains." Beecher`s millennialism therefore imagines the rest of the world as mired in corruption: as he has it, "the history of the world is the history of human nature in ruin."[626] In all these 'imaginings,' US America seems to stand above this 'history of human nature in ruin,' completely unaffected by its 'malevolent' workings.

In my assessment, these examples illustrate how the narratives of naturalness and millennialism join forces to boost each other`s mythic potential. To sum up the above argument, the world will adopt the American way because it is only *natural*, for its identity is so firmly embedded in and reflect the natural order of things. The world will simply have no choice, for US America, as the myth of the Chosen Nation prescribes, was also chosen by the incomprehensible will of the Almighty to become His agent on earth and the ultimate 'Redeemer Nation'[627] for the rest of humanity. A redeemer nation, US America no longer had to emulate the natural order of things, for it itself came to represent the *new order* worthy of emulation. US America, it was therefore believed, would awaken the world to the virtues of freedom and democracy (to the virtues of its Thesis) and encourage the oppressed by its own *example* to throw off the shackles of tyranny. Indeed, as Lieven notes, "it would be quite wrong to think that American messianism necessarily implies a desire to save the world by

[624] Cited in Ernest Lee Tuverson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America`s Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) 25, qtd. in Hughes, 139.
[625] Ezra Stiles, "The United States Elevated to Glory and Honor," 1783, in Conrad Cherry, ed., *God`s New Israel: Religious Interpretations of American Destiny* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) 90, qtd. in Hughes, 139.
[626] Lyman Beecher, "The Memory of Our Fathers," a sermon delivered at Plymouth, Massachusetts, December 22, 1827, in Winthrop Hudson, ed., *Nationalism and Religion in Americ*a (New York: Harper and Row, 1970) 99, qtd. in Hughes, 140.
[627] Ernest Lee Tuveson`s term, his book *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role*.

action; [for] [e]qually strong, and indeed historically more common, has been the belief that America's mission to humanity consists above all of the force of its example."[628]

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To sum up the above argument, I have thus attempted to demonstrate the intricate interaction of the American Thesis and the set of national myths which, as I have argued, give the Creed its ontological status and emotional force. In my understanding, what accounts for the affectivity of mythic constructions is their narrativity (the narrative structure of myth). Drawing on the work by Jerome Bruner, I thus argued that narrative (due to its inherent sequentiality, factual indifference, and its peculiar way of managing departures from the canonical) is the natural mode of organizing experience by humans. Following the work by Richard Hughes, I have thus identified three most fundamental myths (narratives) of US nationalism: the narratives of *chosenness*, *naturalness* (self-evidence) and *messianism/millennialism*. These myths allow to imagine US America as an exceptional nation chosen for a special mission in the world; as the nation whose ideals and institutions emulate the natural order of things ('the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God').

In my assessment, the interaction between the American Thesis and the myths that accompany it (as well as the complex interplay among the myths themselves) is truly synergistic: not only do these myths ("so thoroughly ahistorical and […] so completely self-evident"[629]) mutually sustain one another, but they also lead to the genesis of additional (somewhat contingent, I would say) mythic narratives. One such 'by-product' myth is, according to Hughes, the US nation`s myth of the Innocent Nation or "a profound sense of innocence" that characterizes the US experience: as Hughes notes, "while other nations may have blood on their hands, the nobility of the American cause [the impression of which is provided by the Thesis and its myths] always redeems the nation and renders it innocent."[630] In Lieven`s opinion, the belief in US America`s 'original sinlessness' is "both very old and very powerful:"[631] it strengthens US narrative-based nationalism and tempers the nation's willingness to co-operate with other countries, casting them as 'originally sinful.' In Hughes`s opinion, the myths of Nature`s Nation and the Millennial Nation were most instrumental in the construction of US America as the Innocent Nation:[632] these myths effectively root the US

[628] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 64.
[629] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 60.
[630] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 2.
[631] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 53.
[632] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 199.

national experience in the Edenic age of the past (on one side) and in the golden age of the future (on the other), thereby lifting the nation above and over "the bog of human history"[633] rendering it innocent. "Defined by the beginning of the world," US America "would define its end."[634]

By way of conclusion, I would like to briefly outline the nature of the myth of US innocence for a more comprehensive picture of US national mythology. In his analysis of the myth of the Innocent Nation which has dominated US national consciousness for the most of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Hughes attributes the United States` sense of innocence to the Americans` specific stance towards history and its contents: as the scholar observes, encouraged by their national myths "to ignore the power of history and tradition as forces that shaped the nation,"[635] "many Americans live their lives in the eternal present, a present informed and shaped not by history but by those two golden epochs that bracket human time."[636] The US American sense of ahistoricism (which, as we have discovered, inheres in most of the nation`s myths) encourages the nation to reject the historical process and its traumas, and to imagine itself as living in the eternal present flanked by two glorious epochs – the golden age of the past (the dawn of time / the time of creation) on the one hand and the golden age of the future (the millennium of liberty and justice) on the other. As President Ronald Reagan puts it in his *State of the Union Address*, "[t]he calendar can`t measure America because we are meant to be an endless experiment in freedom, with no limits to our reaches, no boundaries to what we can do, no end point to our hopes."[637]

The specificity of US American nationalism resides in the fact that the US nation was, according to Lieven, mostly "spared by history."[638] This fact manifests itself in the semi-religious faith in the national mythology ("communal self-deception"[639]) by most Americans: the US rarely confronted that kind of history which would challenge the validity of the national myths and set off a process of collective revisionism. By rejecting history, as Hughes notes, Americans "also reject[ed] the most fundamental contents of history, especially finitude, suffering, and death."[640] On the contrary, existing above and beyond history, the US

[633] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 199.
[634] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 60.
[635] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 70.
[636] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 200.
[637] Ronald Reagan, "Address before a Joint Session of Congress on the State of the Union," January 27, 1987, in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan: 1987*, vol. I: January 1 to July 3, 1987 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989) 59-60, qtd. in Hughes, 200.
[638] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 28.
[639] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 28.
[640] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 200.

American nation lives in 'the eternal present:' as if there is no 'before,' but only 'the eternal now;' as if history, indeed, had never happened. As Lieven remarks, the decline in historical studies and the school students` low scores on history exams might testify to this observation.[641] However, as Lieven also believes, the lack of historical knowledge / awareness does not necessarily entail ignorance, but "the presence of myth."[642]

The question that arises in this respect is why US America is so 'forgetful,' whether its ahistoricism might be some kind of the nation`s coping mechanism. In some sense, yes. As we may observe, the world-shattering historical events such as, for example, the French Revolution or the two World Wars of the twentieth century were unfolding far from the American shores. However, US America was living its own history, subjectively not less traumatic. For this reason, I might conclude that the way in which US America deals with historical trauma is via the (self-inflicted) historical amnesia, or the national 'habit of forgetting' / of willing forgetfulness. As Ernest Renan notes, "[f]orgetting, I would almost say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality... The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things."[643] We can all agree that US America is an exceptionally diverse national community (and has always been so). To preserve its national coherence (that is, not to be torn apart by the bitter memories of the past, in which, in my opinion, the US American project abounds), the US nation needs to be a bit more (or a lot more) forgetful than other nations. In my understanding, in US America, one thus needs to learn to forget in order to feel 'at home' within their own nation. As Henry Kissinger puts it:

> the rejection of history extols the image of a universal man living by universal maxims, regardless of the past, of geography, or of other immutable circumstance... The American refusal to be bound by history and the insistence on the perpetual possibility of renewal confer a great dignity, even beauty, on the American way of life. The national fear that those who are obsessed with history produce self-fulfilling prophecies does embody a great folk wisdom.[644]

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[641] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 61.
[642] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 68.
[643] Ernest Renan, *What Is a Nation?* (1882), trans. Martin Thorn, in *Becoming National: A Reader*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 45.
[644] Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994) 833, qtd. in Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 63.

In my understanding, in the US American 'cult of the nation' ("the heightened culture of nationalism"[645]), the language of innocence supported by the nation`s sense of ahistoricism thus serves to affirm the unity of Americans in one common national identity, for, as I have attempted to demonstrate, the disruptive forces (the American Antithesis as well as other kinds of dissent, all legitimized by the nation`s loyalty to the ideal of individual sovereignty) continue to operate within the national fabric, constantly threatening the internal cohesion, while the effects of their workings (under certain circumstances) might be quite powerful, not to say, lethal.

It is perhaps this fact that, in my opinion, may account for US America`s sense of insecurity as *one* nation and nurture two national obsessions: one with "cultural and moral decline," another one – with "domestic treachery."[646] According to Lieven, this in turn gives rise to the "nationalist rhetoric of anxiety."[647] As the scholar observes, most politicians and public intellectuals willingly avail themselves of this language, while the US press and media astonish by their employees` "capacity for both radicalism and sheer hatred."[648] The unwillingness or even inability among the Americans, mainly the dominant sections of the political and media worlds, to question the nation's innocence fuels, according to Lieven, "a culture of public conformism."[649] As Lieven remarks, drawing on Louis Hartz, "[w]hen one's ultimate values are accepted wherever one turns, the absolute language of self-evidence comes easily enough," in which he recognizes "the mood of America's absolutism: the sober faith that its norms are self-evident." This faith feeds "the conformitarian ethos" which "has always been infuriating because it refuses to pay its critics the compliment of an argument."[650] As Senator Fulbright observes, "[i]n the abstract we celebrate freedom of opinion as part of our patriotic legacy; it is only when some Americans exercise it that other Americans are shocked, [for] [i]ntolerance of dissent is a well-noted feature of the American national character."[651] More than a century before, de Tocqueville similarly noted that he knows "no country in which there is so little true independence of mind and freedom of discussion as in America, [for] [t]he majority raises very formidable barriers to the liberty of opinion: within these barriers an author may write whatever he pleases, but he will repent it if

[645] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 28.
[646] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 28.
[647] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 29.
[648] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 31.
[649] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 54.
[650] Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1955) 58-59, qtd. in Lieven, 56.
[651] J. William Fulbright, *The Arrogance of Power* (New York: Random House, 1966) 27, qtd. in Lieven, 54.

he ever step beyond them."[652] These observations, in my opinion, quite aptly illustrate the socially binding and assimilatory power of the Thesis and its myths which in Bercovitch`s assessment translates into nothing less than "tyranny of the culture"[653]

I therefore might conclude that it is for these reasons that the national language of innocence, the conformism it generates, and the US refusal/reluctance to face the pain of history (past and in the making) may produce counterproductive strategies in dealing with the reality of structural problems. As I see it, these national 'habits' also make it virtually impossible to discuss public issues openly and with the involvement of different (conflicting/dissenting) perspectives, thus abridging the most fundamental liberty US America prides itself on, that is, the right to individual sovereignty as expressed in the freedom of speech.

[652] De Tocqueville, *Democracy*, 271.
[653] Bercovitch, *The Rites of Assent*, 44.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the main argument of the thesis is that the identity of the United States of America as a nation is represented by the American Thesis (the American Creed / the American Ideology), a set of propositions, central of which is the semi-religious adherence to the ideal of individual sovereignty / liberty. The American Thesis as the US nation`s identity, its common-sense vision of social reality and morality, therefore renders the "discursive construction[…] of the nation plausible and self-evident, […] creat[ing] internal solidarity and commitment to the nation state and its policies, [as well as] represent[ing] the US to outsiders."[654]

I have attempted to support my argument by, first, defining the phenomenon of the nation as a mental construct, the product of the human mind and its activities, for, as I tend to argue, it is the human factor (the human agency) that constitutes the nucleus of social action, combining in itself both culture (idealism) and structure (social structuralism). I thus approach the nation as 'an imagined community' (Benedict Anderson`s concept). According to Anderson, national communities are distinguished by the specific styles in which they are imagined, that is to say, in my understanding, the specific image of a national community is necessarily maintained by the symbolic (narrative) means of a culture. An imagined community, the nation is also a 'political community' and a 'form of politics' at that (John Breuilly`s conception of nationalism), which links the phenomenon to the issue of power and the exercise thereof. I, for my part, choose to relate the issue of power to the struggle for the monopoly on the positions of dominance among those segments of society that find themselves in possession of economic, political, and not least cultural or symbolic *capital* (Pierre Bourdieu's term), that is, among the elites. Following Liah Greenfeld`s understanding of the nature of social reality, I therefore argue that social action tends to be determined principally by the motivations of the relevant actors in power (in possession of capital), or, in other words, by the "persons who, by virtue of their strategic locations in large or otherwise pivotal organizations and movements, are able to affect political outcomes regularly and substantially."[655] To study the nation is therefore to identify the relevant actors, determine their motivations, and examine how these motivations are in turn shaped by the image of reality in the minds of the involved agents (their subjective ontological and axiological orientations). It is also similarly important to study the situational constraints in which the actors find themselves and which virtually force these power groups to adopt a particular course of action. By analyzing the structural

[654] Paul, *The Myths that Made America,* 17.
[655] Higley, *Elite Theory in Political Sociology*, 3.

and cultural constraints (Greenfeld`s distinction) operant in the construction of nations (to attempt some kind of the 'archeology of knowledge'), we might therefore identify the structural and ideological origins of a respective national identity (in this case, the identity of the United States).

I therefore study the specific contexts of the US national identity. Following Howard Zinn`s research on the elites in colonial and post-revolutionary America as well as Greenfeld`s description of the structural phase in the process of nation building, I argue that the colonies` secession from the English center entailed structural changes in the social reality and resulted in the structural inconsistencies between the traditional organization of this reality and the non-canonical context of the day. The canonical image of social reality provided by the colonies` membership in the English nation thus guaranteed the status-quo configuration of power relations, thus legitimizing the elites` place in the social hierarchy (their identity) as indeed the colonial upper class. The structural change in the social reality resulted in the crisis of identity (status inconsistency) for these power groups (structurally manifested as 'anomie') and directly imperiled the status-quo power relations (the possession of all sorts of capital), guaranteed by this traditional identity. In my understanding, the elite groups thus sought to create a new 'narrative of identity' (Anderson`s term) for the nascent US American nation. This identity was to persuasively articulate the colonists` grievances inflicted by the British metropole and legitimize the colonies` dissent as canonical, and later unite the young nation into one (affectively binding) ideological consensus / one common image of social reality. Following Greenfeld`s discussion of the cultural phase in the project of nation-building, I therefore argue that the nascent US nation was already in possession of national identity which was the identity of the English nation. Curiously enough, in US America, national identity predated the formation of a unique *American* identity. Therefore, the narrative of the US national self could have been formulated in the only language that was native to the former colonists, that is, the language of English nationalism with its peculiar complex of beliefs and values. This language thus represented the cultural constraints from which the US national identity emerged.

The American Thesis (Anatol Lieven`s term) therefore became the model and blueprint of thought and action as well as the common-sense image of social order for the US American nation, indeed, the dominant 'principle of vision' and its very identity. The central postulate of the Thesis is the idea of individual sovereignty, "the absolute sovereignty, self-government,

or independence of every individual,"[656] and the ensuing "faith in liberty, constitutionalism, the law, democracy, individualism and cultural and political egalitarianism."[657] The Thesis thus binds the diverse nation of US America ideologically by effectively managing / habituating dissent from the canonical image of social reality (in the form of what Lieven calls the American Antithesis, the radically conservative strand within US nationalism) and ensuring the constancy of the practice of democracy in such moments of crisis (Robert Bellah`s 'times of trial') when the nation seems to have departed from its original identity.

In my opinion, the astonishing ontological and affective power of the Thesis might be attributed to the fact that the Creed draws on a set of common national / cultural myths which allow to rationalize, legitimize, and ritualistically reenact the US national identity as defined by the Thesis. I thus ascribe the affectivity of mythic constructions to the fact that myth is inherently *narrative* in structure. Following Jerome Bruner`s argument, I attempted to demonstrate that the organization of experience narratively is innate / organic to the human mind. Meaning (including social meaning) is thus achieved via narrative. Drawing on the work by Richard Hughes, I therefore argue that the meaning of the US national self is achieved via the most fundamental mythic narratives of US culture: the narratives of *chosenness*, *naturalness* and *messianism/millennialism*. These narratives depict US America as the nation whose ideological and institutional organization rests on the principles of the natural order of things as designed by God and first revealed at the dawn of creation. Nature`s nation, the United States is thus entrusted with the mission to "illumine the globe with truth, justice, goodness, and democratic self-government and […] thereby usher in a final golden age for all humankind."[658] Operating synergistically, these narratives in interaction with the principles of the Thesis make the narrative of the US national self. As Lieven believes, "[t]he American Creed, and the institutions which it underpins, are indeed the nation`s greatest glory and will be its greatest legacy after the United States itself has disappeared. The fruits of American [policies] may prove ambiguous or even disastrous in the long run; but the principles which have allowed masses of diverse people in an enormous land to live together and prosper without coercion will always have positive lessons to teach."[659]

[656] Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 412.
[657] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 49.
[658] Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 131.
[659] Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, 52.

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