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THE ROUTES PROJECT

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

State and Nation

The debate on the European National States is related to the relationship between State and Nation: in particular it concerns the origins, the transformations, the crises and the current outline of this relationship. On the one hand the **idea of a Nation**, based on the homogeneity of the history and culture of a territory, contributed to the construction of the **national states**; on the other hand the state systems have given the countries more legal, economical and linguistic homogeneity, nourishing the sense of belonging and of national identity. The dialectic between these two poles of the matter concerns the construction of the **European Union** and the debate on its historical and cultural roots.

Identity

By the word **identity** we mean the set of building up features of a person, a social group, a people or a group of peoples, as in the case of the European identity. Identity necessarily means self consciousness and awareness of the others; it implies unity and continuity, the ability to interlace the differences and the rifts of experience and history. An **open identity**, aimed at building up relationships and exchanges among people and peoples, is characterized by the presence of this dialectic. On the contrary, a **close identity** is the one that feed itself without or even against the other, shaping a mental stereotyped image of itself, made up of features arbitrarily put as its foundation. A close identity rejects the interaction, the contacts and the change, it seeks shelter and certainty in a mythic past, distant from the human history. Such a mythic distance has often been at the basis of intolerant and discriminating acts, wars, crimes against humanity, all justified as a defense of one's own lost identity or as the building up of a new and pure identity for the future .

Prejudice and stereotype

Prejudice is that set of ideas which, being formed on the basis of previous knowledge and experiences, allows you to assess and face up to new situations. Prejudice doesn't imply in itself a negative attitude towards the others; quite the opposite, if it means the confrontation with the difference, it permits you to elaborate, develop and structure the previous knowledge and opinions. If, on the contrary, it refuses to face the experience and hardens its features, it becomes a **stereotype**, that is a fixed mental image, unable to cope with the reality. Stereotype doesn't need to verify through the experience, the other way



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round, it bends the experience to confirm its validity. It is in this sense that both positive and negative stereotypes act, being each one function of the other one.

Integration and assimilation

The difference between the two words becomes clear if we put them in connection with the ideas of majority and minority, or rather of homologation and diversity. By the word **assimilation** we mean the sharing of a social universe that is homogeneous in its basic features (religious, linguistic and cultural ones). On the contrary, the word **integration** designates the condition of some minority groups that, although fully integrated in their social, economical and political relationships, yet intend to keep alive some of their religious, linguistic and cultural characteristics which belong to their own group of origin or choice. That is to say that they intend to preserve and practice some of those specific aspects of their own **identity**. In the course of history, the anti-democratic regimes stood out for having forced the minorities to abandon their own differences, in order to achieve the total assimilation, or rather homologation, of those human beings.

Diaspora

'Diaspora' is a word that has for long meant a religious phenomenon: the **dislocation of the Jewish people** since the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in the 1st century B. C., or the **disbanding of the first Christians** among the pagans. It has then been extended to the later Jewish **persecutions and deportations** in Europe in the modern and contemporary era. In the last decades this term also refers to the experiences of other deported peoples, obliged to leave their land of origin and to **exile**, as the Armenian, Kurdish or Palestinian peoples.

Citizenship

By **citizenship** we mean the owing of the political rights by people who practice them according to the system of a sovereign State. The enjoyment of the civil and social rights is an essential condition to the political citizenship. Since the end of 1700, the combined practice of **rights/duties** distinguishes the citizen from the subject and the liberal-democratic state from the dictatorship. Since the middle of 1900, thanks to the introduction of the concept of "crime against humanity", the belonging to the human kind has granted the owing of the **inalienable human rights**, irrespective of the practice of the citizenship rights. Therefore, any foreigners or migrants are first of all people carrying universal and inalienable rights; the level of their integration, or assimilation, will be relating to the enjoyment of the granted rights by the citizens of that state.



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Discrimination

The word comes from the Latin *discrimen* which means “what separates”, so “discrimination” implies the act of separation/distinction. In opposition to universal human rights, in the socio-legal-political field the discriminatory act comes true assuming some features belonging or assigned to one or more people in order to separate or exclude them from the civil rights, if not from the common belonging to the human kind. Sex, race, language, religion, social condition and other physical and cultural features belonging to individuals or groups have been used for discriminatory or persecutory purposes, going as far as physical elimination of the discriminates people.

The discrimination act implies, therefore, the assumption of negative stereotypes, prejudicially put at the basis of a relationship, in order to affirm the corresponding positive stereotypes or rather to theorize about the superiority of the discriminant group, and strengthen its self-esteem.

Political emigration

With the expression “political emigration” we mean the individual or collective leaving from one’s own country because of political-cultural reasons, or rather under the pressure/persecution made by the established powers (which, in contemporary Europe, have taken on the totalitarian form of ideologies of State).

During the centuries it has corresponded to the asylum condition, peculiar to intellectuals and/or politics who fled from their country’s lack of freedom and from persecution.

Within the migratory trends, the political matter is often difficult to separate from the socio-economic one since people’s search for better working chances has usually been interlinked with the longing for political freedom and for the achievement of citizenship rights, denied in their home country.