



# INTERRACIAL / INTERETHNIC MARRIAGES AND DELUSIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

## Terms, Theses, Bullets and Happiness

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On occasion of the antiracism week, I delivered a lecture with this title at the Nansen Dialogue Centre in Sarajevo in March 2003. The lecture was then slightly modified and published in the journal for literature and culture *ALBUM*.<sup>1</sup> That version is also available in this symposium's handouts.

On this occasion, I'm not going to make the paper clearer. I'll try to make it the same but a bit renewed.

### Key terms:

- ascribed characteristics
- discrimination
- ethnic, ethnicity
- identity
- individual
- marriage
- mother
- race

### Three theses:

1. Given that neither race nor ethnicity exist, it is impossible for interracial/interethnic marriages to exist.
2. Interracial/interethnic marriages foster racism.
3. Interracial/interethnic marriage de-individualizes the individual in public so as in private.

### Bullets

- Race and ethnicity are ascribed characteristics, meaning they do not exist, but people believe in them.
- *To exist*, in this case, means being ascertainable by anybody at any time.
- Racism is any sort of discrimination based on ascribed characteristics.
- The fact that neither races nor ethnic groups really exist does not mean that racism is not overwhelming.
- Individuals constitute themselves first by distinguishing from their mothers.
- Individuals acquire identity when realizing that their mother is other than them. Mother becomes the Other. My mother becomes my Other.
- Being always in a community, I share my (M)other with some other others. These other others are mine. They are *my* others. We share one mother. One mother, a mother other than my personal mother – a mother of ours is the one that identifies us as us. That is *our* mother, the Motherland, which once became a nation-state.
- I separated from my mother – and I became individual. I found another mother, motherland – and I became a member of a group. However, I'm physically alone now. I need some other other, to be fully mine, to merge with. I get married.
- Marriage is a unity of two persons, where they join their lives so that they become one personality, i.e. they re-identify and de-identify themselves. »Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.« (Moses, Genesis, 2, 24)
- Etymologically, »discrimination« means »distinguishing«. Socially, »discrimination« means »disadvantaging«.
- *Identification* is a process of making the individual *different* from as well as *same* as the others.
- Identification coincides with discrimination. Individuals need both. Nevertheless, individuals cannot stand being discriminated/identified.
- Death and marriage are two ways of dealing with *thorough* discrimination/identification.

- Death is a complete merging with the world, cosmos, Being and/or Not-being, but there is no more individual experience.
- Marriage provides individuals with only a symbolical merging whilst allowing for further experience.
- Choosing between death and marriage, individuals mostly go for the latter.

To conclude, death prevents from experience, whereas marriage is bare symbolical unity, so that neither death nor marriage meets the individual's pursuit to complete and active integration, which tends to be called happiness.

The moral of this paper could be the famous saying by Rimbaud, which perfectly fits into many contexts: *»Moi, j'est un Autre!«*

